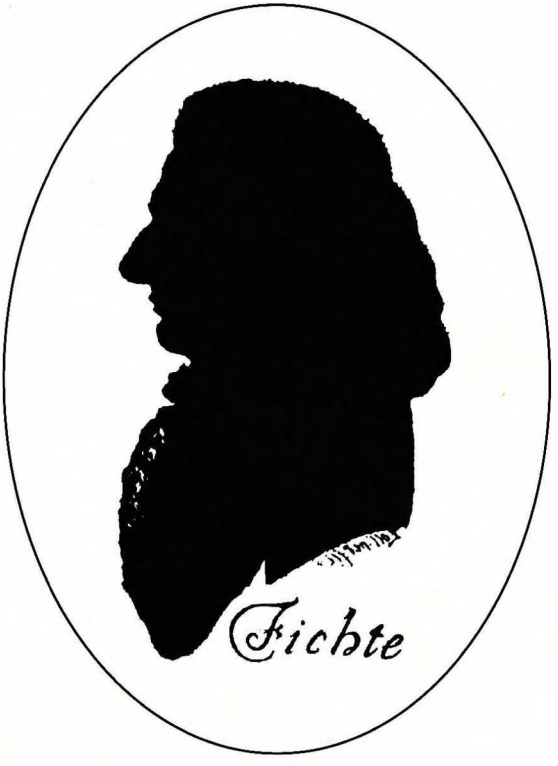

FICHTE

Early Philosophical Writings

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

DANIEL BREAZEALE

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CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

ITHACA AND LONDON

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To Viviane Cecile Jeanne Chabas

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PREFACE

J. G. Fichte was a controversial figure during his own lifetime, and his system of philosophy, the *Wissenschaftslehre,* or "Theory of Scientific Knowledge," has been a subject of controversy ever since. Fichte saw himself as the heir to Kant and viewed his own philosophy as a systematic and "scientific" presentation of transcendental idealism, and thus as true to the "spirit," if not to the letter, of his illustrious predecessor. But many of Fichte's contemporaries, including most of the "Kantians" of the day, and eventually Kant himself, rejected this claim and treated Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as an entirely new and original philosophical system.

Though Fichte's philosophy enjoyed a certain vogue in the 1790s and early 1800s, it was soon eclipsed in the eyes of the philosophical public by other, equally grand, systems: first by those of Schelling and then more decisively by Hegel's system. Indeed, almost every subsequent interpretation of Fichte has been written under the influence of Hegel's interpretation of Fichte as a "subjective idealist," whose philosophy helped pave the way for Hegel's own "absolute idealism." Thus for more than a century and a half, Fichte has been appreciated—when he has been appreciated at all—primarily as a steppingstone on the supposed path "from Kant to Hegel." Of course, there have always been those who have challenged this interpretation of Fichte's significance and have insisted upon the originality and intrinsic importance of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This is more true today than it has been in the past, thanks in large part to the rise of the so-called Munich school of transcendental philosophy. Not only has this new interest in Fichte produced a monumental new critical edition of his writings and many excellent scholarly studies of his thought, it has also promoted what can only be called a revival of philosophizing "in the Fichtean manner."

Although it originated in Germany and in France, the recent Fichte revival has not been limited to Europe. New translations of Fichte's writings, as well as interpretations of his philosophy, have begun to appear in English as well. The present volume of translations is, in part, a response to this new interest in Fichte on the part of English-language readers. But it is also intended to promote even more interest in this much misunderstood thinker.

All of the texts translated here were written between 1794 and 1799, the period when Fichte was a professor at Jena and was presenting the public with the first and best-known version of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* The only full-scale presentation of the first principles of his system that Fichte published during his lifetime was the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* published in 1794–95 and based on Fichte's lectures during his first year at Jena. English readers interested in Fichte will be familiar with Peter Heath's 1970 translation of the *Foundations.* But though the *Foundations* must be the central text for any interpretation of Fichte's early (or "Jena") system, it is a deeply flawed and extraordinarily obscure work—as generations of readers have testified and as Fichte himself recognized from the beginning. Few major texts in the history of philosophy cry out more loudly for explanation and clarification. Indeed, much of Fichte's effort during the remaining years of his career at Jena was devoted to explaining and refining the standpoint so inadequately presented to the public in 1794–95.

The texts assembled in this volume are all concerned, in one way or another, with elucidating the early version of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Some of them, for example, *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation,* were written prior to the *Foundations* and—in their very different ways—were meant to serve as introductions to Fichte's transcendental standpoint. Others, most notably the highly technical treatise titled *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty,* are themselves integral parts of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and are meant to supplement the exposition provided in the *Foundations.* This volume also includes many texts, such as the "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre,*" in which Fichte attempts to provide a brief overview of his system, and to do so in a manner that will be accessible to those who have not been able to overcome the difficulties of the *Foundations.* Finally, this volume includes a generous selection of letters from Fichte. These letters have been chosen because they contain some of Fichte's clearest and most illuminating comments on and explanations of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

The editor's introduction provides a detailed account of Fichte's career up to the time he left Jena in 1799. The individual prefaces to the ten translated selections provide further biographical and philological

information concerning the composition and publication of the texts. This information sets the stage for an adequate understanding and appreciation of Fichte's philosophy, and especially of the early version of his *Wissenschaftslehre.* I have tried to avoid detailed exegesis, criticism, and philosophical analysis of the *Wissenschaftslehre*—not that such interpretation is not required: on the contrary, if I were not convinced of Fichte's merits as a philosopher, I would hardly have undertaken a project of this sort. However, I am equally convinced that analysis—even philosophical analysis—is not the sort of activity most profitably practiced in a vacuum. Because I believe that no informed interpretation of Fichte's system of philosophy is possible without some familiarity with the *context* within which it was conceived and articulated, I have limited my editorial efforts to providing information of this sort. My sincere desire is that by doing so I will have provided new generations of scholars and students with the materials for new, more adequate interpretations of Fichte's extraordinary and widely unrecognized philosophical achievement.

Over the years that I have worked on these translations I have incurred many debts to my colleagues, friends, and family. For help with specific problems of translation, I am grateful to Anesti Andreas, Thomas Büttner, Robert Rabel, and Reinhart Sonnenburg. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Barbara Gay, who read the entire first draft of my manuscript and suggested hundreds of improvements in the translations. I also acknowledge the patient and professional assistance that I have received from the editors and staff of Cornell University Press and express my particular thanks to John Ackerman, Marilyn Sale, and Kathryn Gohl.

This book was begun in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1976–77. Initial work on the project was supported by a research fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. In the following years my continuing research on Fichte was supported by the University of Kentucky. It is, however, unlikely that these translations could have been completed without the assistance of two Translations Project Research Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1979 and 1981. I am sincerely grateful to the University of Kentucky, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities for their generous support.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*J. G. Fichte Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.* Ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacob, and Hans Gliwitsky. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964– . (This edition is published in four parts: I = works published by Fichte; II = writings not published by Fichte himself; III = correspondence; IV = students' lecture notes. Each part is arranged chronologically and consists of many volumes. Citations to this edition include part, volume, and page number.)
B	*J. G. Fichtes Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe.* Ed. Hans Schulz. 2 vols. 2d ed. Leipzig: Haessel, 1930.
FvB	*Fichte in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen.* Collected and ed. Hans Schulz. Leipzig: Haessel, 1923.
H/L	J. G. Fichte. *The Science of Knowledge.* Ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982 (orig. 1970).
LB	*Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Leben und litterarischer Briefwechsel.* Ed. I. H. Fichte. 2 vols. 2d ed. Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1862.
SW, I–VIII	*Johann Gottlieb Fichtes sämmtliche Werke.* Ed. I. H. Fichte. 8 vols. Berlin: Veit, 1845–46.
SW, IX–XI	*Johann Gottlieb Fichtes nachgelassene Werke.* Ed. I. H. Fichte. 3 vols. Bonn: Adolph-Marcus, 1834–35. (As is customary, vols. I–III of this collection of posthumously published writings are treated as vols. IX–XI of I. H. Fichte's edition of *Fichtes sämmtliche Werke.*)

NOTE ON TRANSLATION

Fichte's stature as a philosopher is not equaled by his abilities as a writer. His presentation oscillates between patches of sometimes sentimental and sometimes inflammatory rhetoric and passages of dry (and not infrequently clumsy) technical prose. His "tone" is similarly uneven: one moment he addresses the reader in a modest, even conspiratorial tone, while the next moment he assumes a tone of wounded vanity and self-righteousness. But though he is neither a classical prose stylist nor a brilliant innovator, Fichte is a distinctive writer, and all of his writings bear the unmistakable stamp of his forceful personality. The texts translated in this volume are varied. Some are technical treatises written in as abstract and "neutral" a tone as Fichte could muster. Others are public lectures, more closely resembling sermons than normal academic lectures. These rhetorical efforts really need to be read aloud to be adequately appreciated. This volume also includes examples of "fine writing" meant for a cultivated but nonprofessional audience. On the other hand, several texts in this volume are aggressively polemical and reveal Fichte as the no-holds-barred philosophical streetfighter he so often was—especially in the eyes of his contemporaries. Finally, there are the many letters, in which Fichte expresses himself less formally and with even less inhibition than elsewhere. These texts were obviously written by a complex and passionate man, and the translations attempt to convey some of this passion and complexity.

A general principle that should surely guide any translation of philosophical texts is the principle of consistency. But, as with most general principles of conduct, this principle proves to be regulative rather than constitutive. Although every effort has been made to be as consistent as possible in rendering Fichte's terminology, translation is unfortunately not a simple matter of substituting English words for German ones. In

German as in English, words mean different things in different contexts, and these differences too must be respected in translation. Moreover, a certain flexibility is required to produce readable English texts. But the relative importance of such flexibility depends on the nature of the texts. Many of the texts collected in this volume are difficult and highly technical expositions of an equally difficult and equally technical philosophical system. Such texts demand a translation that follows the original as closely as possible.

As is customary in translating eighteenth-century German prose into modern English, some long sentences have been broken up into several English sentences. Nevertheless, an effort has been made to preserve some sense of the distinctive (albeit uneven) rhythm of Fichte's prose. The author's own paragraphing and use of italics have been respected. Editorial interpolations are always indicated by brackets. Fichte's own footnotes are indicated by asterisks. Numbered notes are the translator's.

Finally, no effort has been made to minimize the strangeness of some of Fichte's technical language. In his Jena writings, and especially in his technical presentation of his new system of philosophy, Fichte was self-consciously experimenting with various ways of expressing himself, and this experimental approach extended to coining new technical terms as well as to employing more familiar terms in an unfamiliar and technical sense. The result is an occasional awkwardness of locution. To take the most obvious example: Fichte's texts are filled with references to "das Ich." Talk about "the I" and its activities sounds odd in German too, and Fichte did not express himself in this way because of any lack of more natural-sounding German alternatives (e.g., *das Selbst*). Instead, he thought that a new way of philosophizing deserved a new manner of expression, and he chose to take the stylistic risks this principle implies. In this instance I have elected to run a similar risk, on the assumption that it is not a virtue to produce a translation that is more "readable" or "natural sounding" than the original.

In order to expound his new way of thinking, Fichte occasionally coined entirely new terms, the most important of which is the term he invented to designate that original, self-constitutive activity by means of which the I "posits itself." Fichte's term for this self-creative act is *Tathandlung*, a neologism obtained by combining two ordinary words: *Tatsache*, which means "fact," and *Handlung*, which means "act." A *Tathandlung* is, accordingly, a "fact" that is at the same time an "act." Or, as Fichte himself explains: it is "an activity which presupposes no object, but itself produces it, and in which, accordingly, the *acting* (*Handlung*) immediately becomes the *deed* or *fact* (*Tat*)" (*SW* I: 468). Because there appears to be no way to render this play on words into English, *Tathandlung* has here been translated throughout as "Act."

Finally, a word about Fichte's own name for his system: *Wissenschaft* means "science"; the German term, however, especially in its late-eighteenth-century usage, is by no means limited to "natural science" but includes any disciplined study and every systematic body of knowledge. For these reasons, "science" is not an entirely satisfactory translation of Fichte's *Wissenschaft.* But it is certainly superior to "knowledge." There are several German words that might plausibly be rendered simply as "knowlege," but *Wissenschaft* is not one of them. "Scientific knowledge" is perhaps the closest English equivalent for Fichte's term. *Lehre* means "teaching," or "theory" or "doctrine," as in "theory of evolution" or "Spinoza's doctrine of freedom." It most certainly does not mean "science." For these reasons it is unacceptable to translate Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* as "Science of Knowledge," despite the unfortunate fact that this is the name by which it has long been known in English. Either it should be translated as something like "Doctrine of Science" or "Theory of Scientific Knowledge," or else it should not be translated at all. Since *Wissenschaftslehre* is manifestly a technical term even in the original German versions of Fichte's texts, and since there is no truly adequate way to render it into English, it has been left untranslated in its many appearances in this volume.

The German-English Glossary is provided for the reader's information. Wherever possible, the translation follows well-established conventions for rendering eighteenth-century philosophical German into English, for which Norman Kemp Smith's widely used translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* may serve as a guide. (Thus, for example, *Vorstellung* is here translated as "representation," and *Anschauung* is rendered as "intuition.") An attempt has also been made to coordinate this translation with the translation of the 1794–95 *Foundations of the Wissenschaftslehre* and the two introductions of 1797 by Peter Heath and John Lachs (= *H/L*). Nevertheless, some significant differences remain, as indicated in the glossary.

GERMAN-ENGLISH GLOSSARY

GERMAN	ENGLISH
ableiten	to derive
annehmen	to assume, to take
Anschauung	intuition
Anstoss	check
Antrieb	stimulus
auffassen	to comprehend
aufmerken	to pay attention, to attend, to heed
Aufmerksamkeit	attentiveness
aufstellen	to establish
ausbilden	to cultivate, to develop, to educate
Ausbildung	education, development
ausschliessen	to exclude
Bedingung	condition
Bedürfniss	need, requirement
begreifen	to comprehend, to understand
Begrenzung	limitation
Begriff	concept
Beschaffenheit	property, set of properties, constitution, condition
besonder	particular, specific
bestimmen	to determine, to specify, to define
bestimmt	determinate, specific, etc.
Bestimmtheit	determinacy
Bestimmung	determination, vocation, destiny, feature, characteristic feature, specific determination, specific character, specification, designation, definition
betrachten	to contemplate, to regard
beweisen	to prove, to demonstrate
Bewusstsein	consciousness
beziehen	to relate

Beziehung	relation, relationship
Bild	image
bilden	to cultivate, to educate, to develop, to improve, to form images, to shape, to form
Bildung	formation, education, cultivation, development
darstellen	to present, portray
Darstellung	presentation, exposition
Dasein	existence
Eigenschaft	property
Einbildungskraft	imagination
Eindruck	impression
Einwirkung	effect
Empfindend	sensor, sensing subject
Empfindung	sensation
entgegensetzen	to oppose, to posit in opposition (*H/L* = to counter-posit)
Erkenntnis	knowledge
Erscheinung	appearance
erweisen	to prove, to demonstrate, to show
evident	self-evident, obvious
Faktum	fact
fest	sound, solid
Gefühl	feeling, sense
gegenseitig	mutual, reciprocal
Gegenstand	object
Gehalt	content
Geist	mind, spirit
Gelehrte	scholar
gelten	to be valid
Gemüt	mind
Geschichtlichkeit	skill
Glaube	belief, faith
gleich	equal, same, equivalent, identical
Glied	term, element
Grenze	boundary, limit
Grund	basis, foundation, reason, ground
grunden	to base, to establish, to provide with a foundation, to be the basis of
Grundlage	foundation
Grundsatz	first principle, basic principle
gültig	valid
Handlung	action
Handlungsart	mode of acting, kind of activity
hemmen	to inhibit
hervorbringen	produce
Ich	I (*H/L* = self)
Ichheit	I-hood
ideal	ideal
Idee	Idea
Intelligenz	intellect

Korperwelt	physical world
Kraft	force, strength
Kultur	culture
Lehrsatz	theorem (*H/L* = discourse)
Leiden	passivity, passive state
Mannigfaltigkeit	manifold
Materie	matter, content, substance
Merkmal	property, characteristic feature, distinguishing feature
mittelbar	indirect
Mittelbegriff	middle term, mediating concept
Moment	element, moment
nachbilden	to copy
Neigung	inclination
Objekt	object
Producieren	producing
Prüfung	examination
Raisonnement	arguing
recht	right
Recht	right, law
Richtung	direction
Ruhe	stasis, (state of) repose
ruhend	static
Satz	proposition, principle
schlechthin	simply, absolutely
schliessen	to infer
Schluss	inference
Schranke	limit, limitation
Schwärmerei	muddled enthusiasm, overheated enthusiasm and fanaticism, fantasy
schweben	to oscillate, to hover, to float, to be suspended (*H/L* = to waver)
Sein	being, existence
selbsttätig	spontaneous, autonomous
Selbsttätigkeit	spontaneity
Selbstdenker	independent thinker
Selbstgefühl	self-awareness
setzen	to posit
Sinnenwelt	material world
sinnlich	sensuous
Sinnlichkeit	sensibility, sensuousness, realm of the senses
Sinnwesen	physical being
Stand	class
Stoff	material, content (*H/L* = matter)
streben	to strive
Substanz	substance
Tat	act, deed
Tathandlung	Act
Tätigkeit	activity
Tatsache	fact
Täuschung	deception

Trieb	drive, impulse
übersinnlich	supersensuous
Uebereinstimmung	harmony, agreement
unmittelbar	direct
unterdrücken	to suppress
Ursache	cause
Urteilungskraft	judgment
Verbindung	connection, association
Vereinigung	union, unification, association
Verhältnis	relation, relationship
Vermögen	ability, capacity, faculty
Vernunft	reason
Verstand	understanding
Vervollkommenheit	perfection, improvement
voraussetzen	to presuppose, to assume
Vorstellung	representation, notion, idea (*H/L* = presentation)
Wechselbegriffe	reciprocal concepts
Wechselbestimmung	reciprocal determination, mutual determination
Wechselwirkung	interaction
Wesen	being, nature, essence
Wille	will
Willkür	caprice, choice
wirken	to act, to operate, to work on, to effect, to have an effect
wirklich	actual
Wirksamkeit	efficacy
Wirkung	effect (*H/L* = causal process)
Wirkungssphäre	sphere of efficacy
Wissenschaft	science, scientific knowledge
Wissenschaftslehre	*Wissenschaftslehre,* Theory of Scientific Knowledge (*H/L* = Science of Knowledge)
Ziel	goal, aim
zueignen	to appropriate
zufällig	contingent
zurückgehen (in sich selbst)	to revert, to turn back upon oneself
zurückgehend (in sich selbst)	self-reverting
Zusammenhang	connection, context
Zusammensetzung	construction, combination
Zweck	purpose, end, aim, goal, object
zweckmässig	purposive, appropriate
Zweckmässigkeit	purposefulness

FICHTE

Early Philosophical Writings

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Fichte in Jena

The year 1793 was one of rare calm for Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Behind him lay more than a decade of employment as an itinerant tutor, a decade marked by personal uncertainties, professional frustrations, and constant financial insecurity. In the spring of 1793 he resigned his most recent post as a private tutor and settled (for the second time) in Zurich, where he was welcomed into the home of a prominent citizen, whose son-in-law he was soon to become. At this point Fichte had begun to acquire a certain amount of literary fame and to attract attention as one of the most original interpreters of the still-novel Kantian philosophy. Furthermore, he had a definite idea of what he wished to accomplish by settling in Zurich: he was resolved to employ what promised to be an extended period of leisure in order to confront some of his doubts about orthodox Kantianism and to outline and elaborate his own, highly original philosophical views. Before the year was out he had made decisive progress toward achieving this goal. Thus, at the age of thirty-one, this eldest son of a Saxonian ribbon weaver was, as he himself knew, on the brink of an intellectual adventure of the highest order. But even as he was engaged in formulating his first, radically new discoveries in Zurich in the fall of 1793, events were occurring in Weimar and Jena, events that would cut short his period of leisurely speculation and would launch him abruptly and spectacularly upon a new career. Henceforth his philosophy would have to be worked out and presented in the most public manner imaginable. Long before the seeds planted in 1793 would have an opportunity to come to full maturity, Fichte's philosophy would become a European "event" and a polemical cause. In terms of personal

insecurity and professional turbulence the decade ahead would prove to be more than the equal of the previous one.

Fichte's earliest philosophical publications and first efforts to satisfy himself regarding major philosophical problems occurred in the three years immediately preceding his return to Zurich, but it was during this year in Zurich that he made the first really decisive advance upon his own earlier Kantian position. And it was during the years immediately following, while he was a professor at Jena, that he constructed the first version of his new philosophical system and presented it to the public. Fichte was not the sort of man by whose daily habits people might set their watches. The external circumstances of his life and career were often tumultuous, and without some acquaintance with these circumstances it is difficult to understand why and how the first presentations of his philosophy took the particular form that they did.[1]

In 1784 Fichte was forced by economic exigency[2] to discontinue his university studies at Leipzig. For the next decade he supported himself as a private tutor, all the while trying to continue his studies on his own and to obtain a state stipend that would permit him to resume his studies

[1]This statement applies to Fichte's career in its entirety. An acquaintance with the external facts of his biography is, e.g., just as relevant to an understanding of why the latter versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* were presented as private lectures in Berlin as it is to an understanding of why the first version took the form that it did in Jena. Since, however, the writings with which we are now exclusively concerned belong to the earliest period of Fichte's development and presentation of his own philosophy, I discuss his life and career only up to 1799, the date of his dismissal from his position at Jena. This partial account of Fichte's career is based upon the following sources: (1) J. G. Fichte, *Briefwechsel,* ed. Hans Schulz, 2 vols. 2d ed. (Leipzig: Haessel, 1930; henceforth, *B*). (2) *J. G. Fichte: Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,* ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacob, and Hans Gliwitzky (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann, 1964– ; henceforth *AA*). I have especially benefited from the meticulous editorial introductions to the published and unpublished writings in Part I, vols. 1–5, and Part II, vols. 1–4, of this magnificent edition. (3) I. H. Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichtes Leben und literarischer Briefwechsel,* 2d ed. (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1862; henceforth *LB*). (4) Eduard Fichte, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Lichtstrahlen aus seinen Werken und Briefen nebst einem Lebensabriss* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863). (5) Hans Schulz, ed., *Fichte in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1923; henceforth, *FvB*). (6) Fritz Medicus, *Fichtes Leben,* 2d ed. (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1922). (7) Xavier Léon, *Fichte et son temps,* vol. I (Paris: Armand Colin, 1922).

[2]More specifically, Fichte's departure from his university studies was required by the withdrawal of the private support that had financed all of his education. Baron Ernest Haubold von Miltitz had been so impressed by the precosity of the eight-year-old gooseherd, Fichte, that he assumed full responsibility for the boy's education, first in the home of a private tutor and then at the celebrated preparatory school at Pforta. Though the baron died shortly after Fichte entered Pfotra in 1774, his heirs continued for another decade to support Fichte's studies at Pforta and then at the Universities of Jena, Wittenburg, and Leipzig. The occasion for terminating this patronage arrangement appears to have been a dispute between Fichte and the widowed baroness, who was dissatisfied by Fichte's slow progress toward his ostensible goal of becoming a village preacher and displeased by the wide-ranging, unfocused nature of his university studies. Indeed, it is surprising that Fichte was able to continue to receive support from the von Miltitz family as long as he did, for his combination of pride and poverty made him a difficult man to patronize.

and eventually to obtain the theology degree toward which he was working. He was not particularly well suited for his new profession and was never able to keep a single position for more than a few years, and usually not that long. Moralistic and ambitious, the young tutor almost invariably came into conflict with his employers, who were either aristocrats or members of the upper bourgeoisie and who tended to treat their children's tutor as one more member of the staff of household servants—an opinion Fichte by no means shared.[3] The first four years of this period as a tutor seemed to have been especially bitter ones for Fichte. Time and again he would accumulate sufficient savings to permit him to resign from an unbearable position, only to be forced by lack of better opportunity and genuine poverty to return once again to the hated profession of private tutor. It was in this manner that Fichte first came to live in Zurich, as tutor to the two children of a wealthy Swiss innkeeper, during the years 1788–89. During this period he made the acquaintance of the small circle of local citizens with an interest in culture and ideas, including those religious and political issues that had assumed special urgency in the light of the revolutionary events then occurring in neighboring France. Among these persons were Johann Kaspar Lavater, a local pastor and an author of European reputation, and Hartmann Rahn, an official in the customs house and ardent sympathizer with the French Revolution. As usual, Fichte's departure from Zurich after a stay of nineteen months was precipitated by a dispute with his employers. He left Zurich for Leipzig, filled with new plans and ambitions, but not before becoming engaged to Johanna Rahn, daughter of the customs official.

Little is known concerning Fichte's philosophical orientation during these early years. He appears to have subscribed to the Leibnizian-Wolffian system, which he interpreted in a strictly deterministic manner. The surviving evidence shows how, under the influence of this interpretation, the young Fichte reluctantly abandoned his own belief in free will and became a defender of metaphysical fatalism. Although such an interpretation was rejected by Leibniz and Wolff themselves (who insisted upon the compatibility between "free will" and "determinism"), it was nevertheless widespread in the late eighteenth century and was often (and derisively) identified with "Spinozism." The debate over the issue of "Spinozism" and its alleged pantheistic consequences was one of the

[3]Evidence of the attitude that brought Fichte into such frequent conflict with his employers (the parents of his charges) may be found in the journals he kept during his first stay in Zurich. The purpose of these journals was to record (in Fichte's words) "the most notable mistakes in education" which he had observed his employers making; one of these journals was prepared specifically for presentation to the guilty parties! These documents are printed in *B*, I: 28–45, and also in *AA* II, 1: 141–204. An English translation by G. H. Turnbull is available in Turnbull's *Educational Theory of J. G. Fichte* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), pp. 137–53.

most important intellectual concerns of the era and reached its peak in the early 1780s with the public exchange between Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Jacobi concerning the interpretation of Lessing's theological views.[4] In this debate the young Fichte appears to have been firmly on the side of the metaphysical determinists.[5]

The idea of a career in philosophy had not yet occurred to Fichte when he arrive in Leipzig in 1789. His first plan was to finish his theological studies and secure ordination as a village pastor. Fichte was an outstanding orator, and throughout his career as a private tutor he continued to deliver occasional sermons in local churches. Indeed, echoes of the pulpit are not hard to detect in the famous speeches he continued to deliver after embarking upon his university career. Other plans entertained by Fichte at this juncture included founding a school of elocution, composing plays and novels, editing a magazine for women, and becoming an administrative official in the court of some minor prince.

Despite vigorous efforts, none of Fichte's ambitious plans bore fruit in Leipzig, and thus once again he had to begin giving private lessons in order to support himself. This time, however, the result was momentous, for he was employed by a student who wished assistance in understanding the new philosophy that everyone seemed to be talking about but that was reputed to be fabulously difficult: the Kantian philosophy. Though entirely innocent of any direct acquaintance with Kant's writings, Fichte accepted the assignment and immediately immersed himself in an intense study of Kant's three Critiques (the last of which, the *Critique of Judgment,* had only just been published). This unanticipated encounter with Kant's writings in the summer of 1790 worked a genuine revolution in Fichte's way of thinking. It is not going too far to describe the result of this encounter as a "conversion." As he himself dramatically announced in a letter to an old friend: "I have been living in a new world

[4]For a discussion of the controversy over "Spinozism" in the late eighteenth century, see Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 352–60.

[5]By far the most illuminating evidence concerning Fichte's philosophical views during this period is found in a short, unpublished, and undated fragment later published under the title *Aphorismen über Religion und Deismus* ("Aphorisms on religion and deism"). These "aphorisms," which already show an acquaintance with the *Critique of Pure Reason,* were probably composed in 1790, shortly after Fichte's initial encounter with Kant's work, when he was trying to come to personal terms with the revolution in his own thinking which had been occasioned by his encounter with Kant's writings. See *Johann Fichtes sämmtliche Werke,* ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Veit, 1845–46; henceforth *SW*), V: 3–8, and *AA* II, 1: 287–91). For a discussion of Fichte's "pre-Critical" philosophy, see the following: Willy Kabitz, *Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Fichteschen Wissenschaftslehre aus der Kantischen Philosophie* (Berlin: Reuter and Reichard, 1902), particularly pp. 2–9; Hermann Nohl, "Miscellen zur Fichtes Entwicklungsgeschichte und Biographie," *Kant-Studien* 16, no. 4 (1911): 373–81; and Reiner Preul, *Reflexion und Gefühl: Die Theologie Fichtes in seiner vorkantischen Zeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969).

ever since reading the *Critique of Practical Reason.* Propositions which I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven—e.g., the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc.—and I feel all the happier for it."[6]

It is important for an appreciation of Fichte's own "Kantianism" to understand what so profoundly impressed and influenced him in Kant's writings. Unlike many other early followers of Kant, Fichte was most deeply affected by Kant's moral philosophy—though, as he was fully aware from the first, "this is unintelligible apart from a study of the *Critique of Pure Reason.*"[7] Kant's convincing defense of the priority of practical (i.e., moral) reason accomplished a revolution in Fichte's thinking which swept away his previous determinism and convinced him that any understanding of man would have to *start* with the fact and experience of freedom. This is an insight to which Fichte remained true for the rest of his life; it was also an insight derived from his first study of Kant, which helps us appreciate Fichte's frequently reiterated assertion that his own philosophy was simply a restated (and more consistent) version of Kant's. The personal significance for Fichte of this encounter with Kant's writings can hardly be overestimated, and yet, as the following passage from a letter to his fiancée shows, he was intent from the beginning to *share* his personal experience: to penetrate, to understand, and then to explicate the Critical Philosophy. At the age of twenty-eight, Fichte had at last found his calling.

> On the whole, I have found peace for my mind, which is so full of projects. And I thank that foresight which, just a short time ago, before all my hopes had been frustrated, put me in a position to bear this calamity gladly. To be specific, what seemed to me to be merely an incidental occurrence led me to abandon myself entirely to the study of the Kantian philosophy—a philosophy which tames the imagination (which, in my case, was always very lively), grants the upper hand to the understanding, and bestows upon the entire spirit an incomprehensible sense of elevation above all earthly things. I have adopted a more noble morality; instead of concerning myself with external things, I am more concerned with myself. This has given me a peace that I have never before experienced. In the midst of a steadily worsening external situation, I have passed the most blissful days of my life. I intend to dedicate at least a few years of my life to this philosophy. And all that I write for the next few years at least will be concerned with this philosophy. It is more difficult than you can imagine and certainly needs to be made more easily accesible . . . . it would give me a double pleasure to be able to contribute something to making this philosophy more comprehensible. Its first

[6]Letter to F. H. Weisshuhn, August–September 1790. For an English translation of this letter, see below, Section X, no. 1.

[7]Letter to H. N. Achelis, November 1790 (see below, Section X, no. 2).

> principles are admittedly skull-cracking speculations with no direct influence upon human life. But the consequences of these first principles are of the greatest importance for an age whose morality is corrupt to its roots. I believe it would be of benefit to the world for someone to present these consequences in a clear light. . . . Following the writing I am now working on, and the one after it—which are admittedly intended only for educated thinkers—I plan to do nothing except try to popularize these first principles and to employ eloquence to give them an effect upon the human heart.[8]

The writings to which Fichte refers at the end of this letter arose from his attempt to clarify for himself the basic principles of Kant's philosophy. The first was a popular summary of the *Critique of Pure Reason;* the second (upon which Fichte worked fairly extensively) was to be an "explanatory summary" of Kant's last Critique, the *Critique of Judgment.*[9] This serious concern with the Third Critique is altogether typical of Fichte's interest in Kant—which was never uncritical. From the start, Fichte showed a precocious interest in the problem of the systematic unity of the Critical Philosophy (his own preferred name for Kant's philosophy) and, as soon as he had gained his initial bearings in Kant's writings, concentrated his attention on some of the most notoriously difficult issues in Kant's work: the problematic connection between the transcendental I of the First Critique and the moral subject of the Second, between the realm of nature and the realm of freedom, or, more generally, between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason.* Insofar as Kant deals with these problems at all he does so most explicitly—albeit obscurely—in the Third Critique: hence Fichte's special interest in providing an "explanatory summary" of this last Critique.

While engaged, in his own words, in "hurling myself head over heals into the Kantian philosophy,"[10] Fichte's money, as usual, ran out, and he was once again compelled to set aside his own projects and seek employment as a private tutor. The position he obtained was in Warsaw, for which he left Leipzig—on foot—in the spring of 1791. Upon his arrival in Warsaw, Fichte lost no time in becoming embroiled in an acrimonious dispute with his new employers. The conflict arose at his first interview, and consequently he never entered upon this position. He did, however, with the threat of legal action, succeed in obtaining from his disgruntled

[8]Letter to Johanna Rahn, September 5, 1790.

[9]Fichte's materials and drafts for both of these projects have recently been published in *AA* II, 1. The first is a rather close summary of part of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and is titled "Der transscendentalen Elementarlehre. Zweiter Theil" (*AA* II, 1: 299–318). The second is a much longer, more original and polished essay dealing mainly with themes from the introduction to the *Critique of Judgment* titled "Versuch eines erklärenden Auszugs aus Kants *Kritik der Urteilskraft*" (*AA* II, 1: 325–73).

[10]Letter to Johanna Rahn, August 12, 1790.

employers a financial settlement generous enough to support him in his frugal manner for the entire summer of 1791. Thus, for a short while at least, he was able to return his attention to his own philosophical projects.

Taking advantage of his relative proximity to Königsberg, Fichte decided to use this opportunity to execute a plan he had already formed of making Kant's personal acquaintance and, if possible, pursuing his own studies under the guidance of the master. Accordingly, Fichte spent the summer of 1791 in Königsberg. His first interview with Kant (on July 4, almost immediately upon Fichte's arrival in Königsberg) seems to have been something of a disappointment. Undeterred, the younger man hit on the idea of bringing himself to the attention of the elder by presenting him with a written sample of his work, a sort of personal and philosophical self-introduction. Thus for the next month Fichte threw himself into the preparation of this manuscript.

For his "self-introduction" Fichte chose a theme that would permit him to demonstrate his mastery of the principles and methodology of the Critical Philosophy, but one that had not yet been dealt with in Kant's own writings: the nature of divine revelation. The basic strategy of the investigation, patterned on Kant's strategy in the Critiques, was to begin by positing the *fact* of revelation and then to inquire into the *conditions for the possibility* of this fact. Once these conditions were established they served as criteria for examining all alleged relevations and for delimiting the field of legitimate revelation. Fichte pointed out that such a critique can never establish that anything *is* an instance of divine revelation, but only that it *might be.* The primary conclusion of the inquiry is that no legitimate revelation can contradict either the laws of nature or the moral law; indeed, what distinguishes a case of revelation is precisely its formal *accordance* with the laws of nature, coupled with a content that cannot be *explained* by those laws. This content is nothing but the moral law itself, here interpreted as expressing the will of God. The sole legitimacy of relevation is practical: it is a means for constraining our natural inclinations and thereby assisting us in determining our will in the manner demanded by pure practical reason. Thus revelation may include nothing that would undermine respect for the moral law: it may not substitute promises and threats for duty, nor may it contain articles of religious dogma.

Fichte titled his manuscript "Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation." Not only does this treatise accomplish its primary purpose of breaking new ground for the Critical Philosophy, but it also shows Fichte in complete command of Kant's method and vocabulary and capable of a clarity of exposition that Kant himself could not match. It is typical of Fichte and illuminating to note that the topic chosen is one that demands a resolution of some of Kant's own ambiguities. For the concept of revela-

tion—the sensible appearance of supersensible reality—is one that does not fit neatly under any of Kant's own categories. An analysis of the concept of revelation brings into sharp focus one of the great, unresolved problems in Kant's own writings: What is the relation between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, between nature and morality, theoretical and practical reason, the First Critique and the Second? In the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* Fichte shows that these questions are central and unavoidable. In the context of the narrow Kantianism of this first work, the questions thus raised could not be answered fully and adequately; for that, something more radical would be required, namely, the transformation of the Critical Philosophy into the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Nevertheless, it is important to see the continuity as well as the revolution in Fichte's thinking. The problems of 1791 point to the solutions of 1794.

With the simple inscription "to the philosopher," Fichte sent his manuscript to Kant on August 18. Kant, it seems, was appropriately impressed by this remarkable work of intellectual hommage and invited its author for a second, much more successful, interview. There followed a brief but happy period for Fichte, during which he remained in contact with Kant and other intellectual luminaries of Königsberg. Before long, however, his meager funds were once again depleted, and he was faced with the problem of finding employment. This time he turned to Kant for help. Somewhat to Fichte's surprise, Kant encouraged him to sell his manuscript on relevation and even went so far as to arrange for his own publisher to purchase the publication rights. Kant was also instrumental in securing for the younger man a relatively satisfactory position as a private tutor in the home of a liberal and wealthy count in Krakow, near Danzig. Fichte assumed this—his last—position as a tutor in October 1791 and stayed there for just over a year.

After some initial troubles with the Prussian censor, the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* was finally published in the spring of 1792.[11] With the publication of this book came almost instant and utterly unexpected celebrity for its author. The *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* is a significant work and not without continuing interest for anyone concerned with its topic; nevertheless, it would surely not have attracted the attention that it did had it not been for the accidental circumstances of its publication and the subsequent confusion concerning its authorship. The first copies appeared without the author's name and minus the preface Fichte had written to explain the circumstances of its composi-

[11] *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung,* 1st ed., 1792; 2d ed., 1793 (*SW,* V: 11–174; *AA* I, 1: 15–162). Available in English in a translation by Garrett Green, *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978).

tion. Whatever the reason for this error,[12] the consequences for Fichte's career can hardly be overestimated. Here was a new book, published in Königsberg by Kant's publisher, bearing an unmistakably Kantian title, and revealing an unquestionable mastery of Kantian terminology and modes of argumentation. Furthermore, it dealt with a problem in which Kant had already expressed interest, and it filled an obvious gap in the Critical system. As for its anonymity, this too could be explained by the controversial character of its contents (it includes, for example, a denial of the possibility of miracles). Furthermore, Kant was known to have recently experienced problems with the Prussian censor. In short, the obvious conclusion—and certainly the one drawn by almost all the first readers of the book—was that this was a work from Kant's own pen. It was widely hailed as yet another brilliant achievement by the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* and laudatory reviews began to appear. Naturally, when Kant stepped forward to deny these rumors and to identify the true author, it was too late to retract all the positive things that had been said and written about the book in question. The only conclusion it seemed permissable to draw was the one reported by Jens Baggeson in a letter to his friend Karl Leonhard Reinhold: "Hornemann just came in, out of breath, and brought me the most shocking and astonishing news—something which, of all impossible things is the most impossible of all to believe, namely, that Kant is not the author of the *Critique of All Revelation.* Forgive me, but I would have bet not merely my life, but my immortal soul that nobody but Kant could have written this book. This amazing news of a third sun in the philosophical heavens has set me into such confusion that I can do no more than embrace you . . . in spirit more affectionately than ever."[13]

Thus an obscure former theology student employed as a private tutor on the eastern edge of the German-speaking world found himself celebrated as a rising star in the philosophical firmament, and on the strength of this fame doors were suddenly opened to him which would otherwise have remained closed. It was, for example, because of his reputation as the author of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* that Fichte was invited (in the fall of 1792) to become a contributor to the leading German-language literary journal of the day, the Jena *Allgemeine*

[12]The anonymous first publication of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* has never been satisfactorily explained. Apparently, neither Kant nor Fichte had anything to do with the omissions. It may (as the publisher claimed in a note to the second edition) have been due simply to oversight on the publisher's part, or else it may have been a shrewd calculation designed to sell more copies of the book. If so, it worked.

[13]Letter of September 11, 1792. In *Aus Jens Baggesens Briefwechsel mit Karl Leonhard Reinhold und Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi,* vol. I (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1831), p. 225. Also quoted in *FvB,* p. 4. The other "two suns" alluded to by Baggesen are Kant and Reinhold.

Literatur-Zeitung (which had earlier published one of the first and most enthusiastic reviews of Fichte's book). And still more significantly, had so much sudden attention not been cast upon Fichte by the confusion over the authorship of his first book, it is doubtful indeed that he would have been considered as a candidate for Reinhold's chair at Jena—in which case he would not have had to present his own system to the public in the rushed and imperfect form the occasion demanded.

In Krakow, meanwhile, Fichte was busily devoting his intellectual energies to political questions. This represented no new departure for him: Rousseau had long been one of Fichte's favorite authors (as he was for Kant as well). Indeed, even during his first stay in Zurich, Fichte had already acquired a reputation as something of a Jacobin.[14] Accordingly, he devoted his energies to two new literary projects. The first was a brief, passionate defense of freedom of speech and thought, provocatively titled *A Discourse on the Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Hitherto Suppressed It,* anonymously published in Danzig in 1793.[15] The second was a much more substantial (though no less passionate) treatise titled *A Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution.*[16] As the title indicates, this piece was a defense of the revolution against contemporary German criticism, especially that of A. W. Rehberg. In this work Fichte not only replied to specific criticisms of the revolution, but also undertook a sweeping defense of what he believed to be its underlying theoretical principles. The result is a vigorous statement of the social contract theory of popular sovereignty, an attack upon entrenched privilege, and a defense of the right of revolution. All of these Rousseauean theses are skillfully integrated into a Kantian theory of rights and expounded with passionate eloquence. Like the *Discourse,* this book too was published anonymously, but this time Fichte was widely recognized as its author.

Given the counterrevolutionary mood prevailing in Germany at the time, the publication of such controversial views could be seen by some

[14]Note the passage in Fichte's letter of December 1793 to Heinrich Stephani in which he jokes about the rumor in Zurich concerning a "Jacobin club" supposedly established there by Fichte and Stephani (see below, Section X, no. 7).

[15]Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europens, die sie bisher unterdrückten: Eine Rede (*SW,* VI: 1–35; *AA* I, 1: 167–92). The specific target of this polemical outburst was the Prussian censorship laws of 1788, which had almost prevented the publication of Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* and had recently been invoked against Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone.*

[16]Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die französische Revolution (*SW,* VI: 37–228; *AA* I, 1: 203–404). Only the first part of this projected two-part work was ever written. It was published anonymously in Danzig in two installments in 1793 and 1794 and reprinted in one volume in the second edition (1795). A. W. Rehburg's *Untersuchungen über die französische Revolution* is a fairly typical expression of the conservative, counterrevolutionary sentiment that swept Germany after the initial burst of pro-revolutionary enthusiasm had run its brief course, to be replaced by revulsion at the excesses of the revolutionaries.

only as an act of provocation and defiance. And indeed, Fichte's reputation as the author of these "revolutionary" tracts subsequently proved just as decisive for his career—albeit in a very different manner—as his reputation as the author of the book on relevation. From the moment he was first considered a candidate for an appointment at Jena, his political sympathies were seen as grounds for suspicion by many powerful persons in both Jena and Weimar.[17] Much of the opposition Fichte was to encounter at Jena—opposition that eventually cost him his position—as well as much of the bitterness and vindictiveness that characterized so many of the published attacks upon his writings, had more to do with his reputation as a dangerous Jacobin than with the actual contents of the works he published during his years at Jena.[18]

In November 1792 Fichte resigned from his tutoring position and moved to Danzig, where he spent the next four months working on his political writings as well as preparing a second edition of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Relevation.* The additions to this second edition, especially the new section titled "Theory of the Will," testify to some significant advances in Fichte's philosophical thinking and, above all, to the growing influence upon his thought of Karl Leonhard Reinhold's "Elementary Philosophy." The surviving evidence appears to show that it was during this period that Fichte first began his serious study of Reinhold's works, whose influence upon his own writings soon became unmistakable. What particularly attracted Fichte to Reinhold was their common concern with establishing the *systematic unity* of the Critical Philosophy.[19]

Following something of a triumphal tour through Königsberg, Berlin, and Weimar, Fichte arrived in Zurich in June 1793 with the intention of wedding his fiancée and quietly pursuing his philosophical investigations under the hospitable roof of his new father-in-law. Due to legal complications the wedding did not occur until October 22. Fichte busied himself during the intervening months with work on a projected second part of the *Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution* as well as with the preparation of several reviews he had undertaken for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* The first two reviews (of

[17]Hans Schulz, on pp. 6–7 of *FvB*, quotes passages from some of the letters exchanged among university officials at Jena prior to Fichte's appointment, passages in which doubts are raised about Fichte on the grounds of his "democratic ravings." The issue of his political views was first raised with Fichte himself at the earliest stage of the negotiations that brought him to Jena (Gottlieb Hufeland to Fichte, December 1793). Fichte did in fact, under pressure from university authorities, agree to abandon his plans for a projected second part of the *Beitrag;* however, he refused to take the step of disclaiming his authorship of the published sections (see Fichte to Goethe, June 24, 1794).

[18]This is precisely the charge that Fichte himself subsequently made in his *Gerichtliche Verantwortung gegen die Anklage des Atheismus* (see *SW*, V: 286–88; *AA* I, 6:25-89).

[19]Concerning Fichte's relation to Reinhold, see Daniel Breazeale, "Between Kant and Fichte: Karl Leonard Reinhold's 'Elementary Philosophy,'" *Review of Metaphysics* 35(1982): 705–821.

books by Leonhard Creuzer and F. H. Gebhard)[20] dealt with problems of practical (i.e., moral) philosophy, especially the question of free will and that of the "primacy of practical reason" (the latter a Kantian slogan Fichte was soon to adopt as the guiding principle for his own radical revision of Kantianism).

Both the Creuzer and Gebhard reviews, as well as the books on freedom of speech and the French Revolution, include passages and remarks that clearly presage the *Wissenschaftslehre*,[21] but such hints generally occur merely in passing and their importance can be recognized only in retrospect. Fichte's first clear and unambiguous, though still somewhat tentative, announcement of his advance beyond orthodox Kantianism is found in his third contribution to the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, a lengthy review of C. G. Schulze's *Aenesidemus*.[22] Schulze's book, which purported to be a defense of "Humean skepticism" against the presumptions of the Critical Philosophy, as represented in Kant's writings and as developed by K. L. Reinhold in his Elementary Philosophy, proved the ideal foil for the rapid development of Fichte's own emerging philosophy. Since his own Kantiansim had been decisely shaped by the influence of Reinhold's writings, Fichte quite rightly saw *Aenesidemus* as a direct challenge to his own philosophical presuppositions, and thus he treated the occasion of this review as an opportunity for examining, defending, and where necessary, modifying these presuppositions. For some time Fichte's misgivings about some aspects of Kantianism had been growing, and his earlier writings contain insights and remarks that transcend the limits of his own adopted philosophical position; not until the *Aenesidemus* review, however, are these doubts and innovations brought into clear focus.[23]

More significantly still, it was while he was engaged in the studies provoked by *Aenesidemus* that Fichte first arrived at the central and original idea that underlies all of his subsequent writings. Here is the version of this discovery that Fichte himself is reported to have presented in later years:

> I recall how, in a close, intimate circle, Fichte used to tell us about the origin of his philosophy and how he was suddenly surprised and seized by the

[20]The two reviews in question are a review of Leonhard Cruezer, *Skeptische Betrachtungen über die Freiheit des Willens mit Hinsicht auf die neusten Theorien über dieselben* (*SW*, VIII: 411–17; *AA* I, 2: 7–14), published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, no. 303 (October 30, 1793); and a review of F. H. Gebhard, *Ueber die sittliche Güte aus uninteressirtem Wohlwillen* (*SW*, VIII: 418–26; *AA* I, 2: 21–29), published in no. 304 (October 31, 1793) of the same journal.

[21]For an excellent recent discussion of these early books and reviews in relation to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, see Peter Baumanns, *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre: Probleme ihres Anfangs* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), pp. 56–80.

[22]Translated below, Section I.

[23]Fichte's doubts about both Kant and Reinhold are already evident in his letter of February 20, 1793, to Franz Volkmar Reinhard, translated in Section X, no. 3.

fundamental idea of this philosophy. For some time he had dimly realized that truth consists in the unity of thought and object. He had realized as well that such unity could never be found within the realm of the senses and that where, as in mathematics, it was to be found it produced only a rigid and lifeless formalism completely alien to life and to action. At this point he was suddenly surprised by the thought that the act by which self-consciousness seizes and holds onto itself is clearly a type of knowing. The I recognizes itself as something produced through its own activity; thinker and thought, knowing and its object, are here one and the same. All knowing proceeds from this point of union, not from the sort of unfocused contemplation which is supposed to yield time, space, and the categories. "Now," he asked himself, "if one were to isolate this first act of self-knowing, an act which is presupposed by every human thought and deed and is contained in the most divergent opinions and actions, and if one were to trace the pure consequences of this act, would this act not reveal and display the same certainty which mathematics possesses, though in a form which is living, active, and productive?"

This thought seized him with so much clarity, power, and assurance that he could not give up trying to establish the I as the principle of philosophy. It was as if he were forced to do so by the spirit which had grown mighty within him.[24]

Charming as this account is, there is considerable evidence that Fichte's "discovery" was somewhat less sudden than this story suggests and that the idea of turning to the unity of the I as a solution for the problems inherent in Kantian dualism was one that had been gradually dawning on Fichte for several years prior to the winter of 1793–94.[25] In any case, it was certainly only at this later date, in the months immediately after his marriage, that Fichte first seriously attempted to formulate this idea and to recast the Critical Philosophy in conformity with it. Since the immediate occasion for this ambitious undertaking was the preparation of the review of *Aenesidemus,* and since Schulze's attack is directed

[24]This is the version of the story recounted by Henrick Steffens, one of Fichte's former students, in vol. IV of *Was ich erlebte* (Breslau: J. Max, 1841), pp. 161–62 (quoted also in *FvB,* p. 9). Another briefer but equally fascinating version of the same story is included in the collection of anecdotes compiled by Fichte's nephew, Eduard, in *Johann Gottlieb Fichte,* p. 46: "Let us here mention something which he later told his friends—how, before a warm winter stove and after he had been meditating long and continuously upon the highest philosophical principle, he was suddenly seized, as if by something self-evident, by the thought that only the *I,* the concept of the pure subject-object, could serve as the highest principle of philosophy" (also quoted in *FvB,* p. 9).

[25]Indeed Fichte himself, notably in the "Second Introduction" to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), as well as in some passages in his correspondence, affirmed that the idea of constructing his philosophy upon the pure I had already occurred to him in 1792. Willy Kabitz long ago substantiated this claim, which has been more recently defended by Reinhard Lauth and criticized by Peter Baumanns. For the evidence and arguments on both sides of the issue, see Kabitz, *Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte,* pp. 32–55; Reinhard Lauth, "Genese du 'Fondement de toute la doctrine de la science' de Fichte à partir de ses 'Méditations personnelles sur l'élémentarphilosophie,'" *Archives de Philosophie* 34(1971): 51–79; and Baumanns, *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre,* pp. 69–70n.

most specifically at Reinhold, Fichte's first elaboration of his own position took the form of "personal meditations" on Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy. But, as the recently published manuscript of these "personal mediatations" shows, Fichte's primary concern at this point was no longer simply to defend Reinhold or even Kant against the skepticism of *Aenesidemus;* instead, he was self-consciously seeking to establish the foundations and first principles of his own philosophy.[26] His letters of this period are filled with passages that betray the excitement and enthusiastic self-confidence with which Fichte hurled himself into what would turn out to be a life-long task. The following passage (from the draft of a letter to a philosophy professor in Tübingen) is representative:

> *Aenesidemus,* which I consider to be one of the most remarkable products of our decade, has convinced me of something which I admittedly already suspected: that even after the labors of Kant and Reinhold, philosophy is still not a science. *Aenesidemus* has shaken my own system to its very foundations, and, since one cannot very well live under the open sky, I have been forced to construct a new system. I am convinced that philosophy can become a science only if it is generated from one single first principle, but that it must then become just as self-evident as geometry. Furthermore, I am convinced that there is such a first principle, though it has not yet been established *as such.* I believe that I have found this first principle, and I have found it to hold good, to the extent that I have advanced in my inquiries so far.[27]

Thus by the time that Fichte submitted his review of *Aenesidemus* (which was shortly after the beginning of 1794), he had already attained a genuinely new philosophical standpoint, though the review does little more than hint at his new discovery. It served as the public signal of Fichte's breakthrough and, at the same time, as a pledge on his part to articulate his insight and to elaborate its consequences. Fichte's own plans were simple and clear: he intended for the foreseeable future to continue with the investigations so encouragingly begun, to complete the task of laying the foundation and then to begin constructing upon it his new system of philosophy. In mid-December of 1793 he wrote to a friend, "Now I wish for nothing except the leisure to carry out my project. Afterwards, fate may do with me whatever it wishes."[28] Leisure, however, was not what fate wished for Fichte.

[26]Though utilized by some earlier scholars, this document was published only in 1971 in *AA* II, 3: 19–266, under the double title *Eigne Meditationen über ElementarPhilosophie/Practische Philosophie.*

[27]From draft of a letter to Johann Friedrich Flatt, November or December 1793 (see below, Section X, no. 5; also nos. 6–8).

[28]Letter to Heinrich Stephani, mid-December 1793 (see below, section X, no. 7).

Unofficial word reached Fichte in December 1793 that he was being considered as a candidate for a teaching position at Jena. The chair in question was one specifically set aside for the promulgation of the new Critical Philosophy and was being vacated by Reinhold himself.[29] The official invitation arrived in January, and, flattered as Fichte must have been by this unexpected and very attractive offer, his first concern was for the effect such a change might have upon the project he had just begun. Accordingly, he wrote to his old friend Karl Böttiger, now an official at Weimar: "A discovery around the end of the fall made me wish for nothing more than for a few years of independent leisure. . . . The question is whether Jena will or will not hinder an undertaking which can only be accomplished in independent leisure, and whether they want me to be a professor of the usual type or whether they would rather see me enter upon my post with some distinction. If the latter, then I cannot take up my post before Easter of 1795."[30] Unfortunately, the year's postponement proved inobtainable; thus, since he could ill afford not to take advantage of this stroke of good fortune, Fichte had to revise his plans and try to find some way to integrate the task of constructing his new philosophy with his teaching duties at Jena. Fichte's next letter to Böttiger explains this shift in strategy.

> I readily admit that I wish to commence my teaching career as well equipped as possible and only after having shown the public at large that I am more than partially worthy of this post, and this wish induces me to postpone the beginning of my teaching career until my project has been completed—a project which concerns nothing less than a scientific philosophy, one which can measure itself against mathematics. The success of this project is already as good as assured. Should it be that present circumstances will not permit this postponement, then I would at least wish to show through my lectures that I do possess such a system. Fortunately I have made so much progress in my work since my last letter to you that I can now at least glimpse the end shimmering before me, and could, therefore, lecture on philosophy with more confidence now than when I last wrote. Still, given my manner of working, nothing remains more desirable than uninterrupted leisure. At the same time, this new decision must alter

[29]Goethe, who, in his capacity as privy councillor to Duke Karl-August in Weimar, was highly instrumental in the decision to bring Fichte to Jena, offered the following amusing remark about this appointment: "The Kantian doctrine will prove to be like fashionable clothing: the first models cost the most; then they are copied everywhere and are easier to buy. If Reinhold does not remain, there are still other possibilities. Keep your eye on *Magister* Fichte" (letter to C. G. Voigt, July 27, 1793; quoted in *FvB*, p. 5).

[30]Letter to Karl Böttiger, January 8, 1794. A more detailed explanation of the reason for requesting a postponement is found in Fichte's letter of January 15, 1794, to C. G. Voigt in official reply to the university's offer. A portion of the surviving draft of this illuminating letter is translated below in the editor's preface to *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.*

> my entire plan of studies, for from now on, instead of continuing with my dry speculations, I will have to plan to communicate them in my lectures.[31]

Even as Fichte was revising his intentions and beginning to make plans for developing his philosophy in lectures rather than treatises, he was presented with the opportunity to test the new format. At the instigation of Lavater, Fichte was prevailed upon to deliver a series of private lectures on the general topic of the Critical Philosophy. These "Zurich lectures," which were delivered between mid-February and late April of 1794, proved to be Fichte's first attempt to communicate the general outlines of his new philosophical standpoint. Unfortunately, no copy of these lectures has survived (with the exception of the last lecture in the series),[32] so we must base our notion of their contents upon the draft of a letter in which Fichte briefly outlined the proposed sequence of his lectures.[33] From this description we can affirm that the system presented in the Zurich lectures closely resembles the one presented a few months later in Jena and published as *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*[34]

During his final months in Zurich, Fichte was also engaged in writing a short book describing the distinctive character of his new philosophy and situating it in the philosophical context of the time. This book was to serve as a prospectus for the course of private lectures he intended to deliver during his first semester at Jena. It was meant to be distributed to students in advance of Fichte's arrival and to serve as an "invitation" to his lectures as well as a self-introduction. It was while working on this manuscript that Fichte arrived at a new name for his new philosophy: *Wissenschaftslehre,* or "Theory of Scientific Knowledge," a name, he explained in the letter in which he first announced it, designed to distinguish his system from "mere *'love of knowledge'* or 'philosophy.'"[35] Consequently, he titled his "invitational" work *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre, or, of So-called "Philosophy."*[36]

"The University at Jena stood at the peak of its glory; the combined effect of talented persons and fortunate circumstances would merit the

[31]Letter to Böttiger, February 4, 1794.

[32]Namely, the lecture privately printed under the title *Concerning Human Dignity* (translated in Section II of this volume).

[33]Letter to Johann Kaspar Lavater, beginning of February 1794 (translated below in Section X, no. 9).

[34]Indeed, Fichte explicitly affirmed the connection between the Zurich and Jena lectures when, in a letter to Lavater of June 14, 1794, he described his presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in Jena as "the lectures that I had the good fortune of delivering before you and your friends—reworked, thought through for the second time, and here and there more precisely worded."

[35]Letter to Böttiger, March 1, 1794.

[36]*Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie* (translated below, Section III).

most accurate and vivid description":[37] thus Goethe described Jena during the last years of the eighteenth century. These were indeed Jena's greatest years, during which it stood at the forefront of all German universities. Under the patronage of the progressive court in nearby Weimar, Jena included among its faculty many of the most brilliant men of letters of the day and attracted students not just from Germany, but from all over Europe. With Goethe nearby, with teachers and students like Friedrich Schiller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich and A. W. Schlegel, Novalis, Ludwig Tieck, and many others, Jena became the natural focal point for many of the most vital intellectual and cultural currents of the era. This preeminence was especially marked in the field of philosophy; it was no accident that the first chair set aside for the study of the new Critical Philosophy was established at Jena. Some sense of what it was like to dwell in "the capital of German philosophy" during these years is entertainingly conveyed by the following description, written in 1795 by a young professor at Jena.

> It appears that the first vague rumors of the new philosophical revolution now occurring in Jena have barely begun to reach your distant region. But you can take comfort in, among other things, the fact that the situation is not much better in our own immediate vicinity. In the realm of philosophy, Jena really does seem to be playing the role usually played by a capital city in the realm of fashion. The new fashions always begin to be worn in the provinces just when they are being replaced in the capital by even newer ones. And by the time a new philosophy has begun to blossom beautifully in the rest of Germany, an even newer philosophy is enjoying its springtime in Jena. This was already true six years ago; at that time the old Kantian philosophy was beginning to blossom in the rest of Germany, just as Reinhold was establishing a new school of Kantian thought in Jena. And now Reinhold's method is beginning to find approval and win followers outside of Jena—at the very time when this method has here been all but forgotten. . . . Thus it is that we are always dressed in the latest philosophical garb (or, if you prefer, the latest hats!), while everyone else still wears the old fashions.[38]

Thus anyone interested in philosophy in Germany during these years had to look toward Jena, a fact reflected in the dramatic increase in the number of students of philosophy during this period.[39]

[37]Wolfgang von Goethe, "Tag- und Jahres-Hefte" (1797), in *Goethes Werke*, vol. XXXV (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1892), p. 71.

[38]Friedrich Karl Forberg, *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren* (Jena: J. G. Voigt, 1796), pp. 67–68. Forberg's book is in the form of long letters to an unnamed correspondent. This entry is dated January 27, 1795, or about six months after Fichte's arrival.

[39]The number of students enrolled in philosophy increased steadily during Fichte's years at Jena, only to decline precipitously after his departure. See Max Wundt, *Die Philosophie an der Universität Jena* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1932), p. 237.

This was the environment Fichte entered shortly before his thirty-second birthday in May 1794. It is easy to see why he felt he could not decline the offer from Jena. For Fichte was always concerned not merely with the construction of a new system of philosophy, but equally with its promulgation. "He really intends for his philosophy to have an effect upon the world," remarked one bemused colleague.[40] A better forum than Jena for a philosopher intent upon influencing his age can scarcely be conceived.

Fichte's arrival at Jena was anticipated with an enthusiasm difficult for contemporary university inmates to imagine. His reputation as a spokesman for radical views on religion and politics, coupled with the astonishing student interest (mainly as a result of Reinhold's efforts) in transcendental philosophy, insured the new professor a large and curious audience—at the same time that it predisposed some of his colleagues and others against him. During his first semester Fichte offered two courses: a series of "private lectures" in which he began the formal presentation of his new system and a series of "public lectures" on more popular topics, designed for delivery to the entire university community. Between the Zurich lectures and the work on *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* Fichte had had no time to prepare advance texts of his new lectures. Consequently he had to work at a frantic pace, and all the more so since his plan was to have the texts of his private lectures printed and delivered to his students in installments during the semester. Consequently—and the importance of this can hardly be overemphasized—Fichte had to lay out and elaborate his *Wissenschaftslehre* under conditions that were the very opposite of the "period of uninterrupted leisure" on which he had originally counted.[41]

Public success came quickly to Fichte in his new career. Though attendance at his "private lectures" was respectable from the start and continued to grow throughout the semester, Fichte's initial acclaim at Jena

[40]Forberg, *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren,* p. 63 (also quoted in *FvB,* p. 30).

[41]Fichte's correspondence of the Jena years contains frequent complaints about the haste with which he was forcing himself to work. A month after arriving in Jena he is already appealing to this circumstance to excuse some of the imperfections of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (letter to Goethe, June 21, 1794; translated below in Section X, no. 11. See also the letter to Reinhold, July 2, 1795, and the letter to J. E. C. Schmidt, March 17, 1799; translated below in Section X, nos. 16 and 25). Perhaps the most poignent instance is the following passage from his letter to Reinhold of August 27, 1796: "I teach three classes every day: one dealing with a science which is completely new to me, the system of which I have to construct in the course of my presentation. The other two courses are ones which I have offered before, but I prepare them as if I had never before taught them. Thus I, who have not the greatest facility for elucidating my own thoughts, have to prepare and to teach three classes each day. This occupies five days of the week; the other two are required in order to survey what I will have to prepare in the week that follows. You can judge for yourself how much time is left over for me to take a very lively part in anything at all except matters which are immediately present and how exhausted I am when my day's work is finally over—only to begin it anew the next day."

was based more upon his series of "public lectures" on the topic "Morality for Scholars." Following the success of the first lecture in this series, an obviously euphoric Fichte wrote his wife: "Last Friday I delivered my first public lecture. The largest auditorium in Jena was too small. The entire entrance hall and courtyard were filled; people were standing on tables, benches, and each other's heads."[42] The aim of this lecture was to show the connection between higher learning and the problems of mankind as a whole—in the language of a later era, to demonstrate the "relevance" of university education to human life. But Fichte's purpose went beyond demonstrating this relevance. His clear intent was to persuade his audience to *act* upon this conviction: "He carefully nourishes and cultivates that predisposition toward restless activity which can be found in the heart of every noble young man, and does so in order to insure that this will ultimately bear some fruit. At every opportunity he insists that man's vocation lies in 'Acting! Acting!' "[43] By the end of the summer semester these lectures were attracting enormous crowds of students and teachers. Sometimes as many as five hundred listeners packed the lecture hall to hear the inspired speech of this earnest young professor. Some of the extraordinary intensity of these events is conveyed by the surviving texts of the lectures.[44]

It is difficult for modern readers, with contemporary attitudes about pedagogy and the responsibility of the teacher, to appreciate how genuinely innovative Fichte was as a teacher. Not content simply to presuppose the relevance of his subject to the concerns of his students, he attempted to demonstrate this relevance and urged people to act upon it. Such an approach was unprecedented among the teachers at Jena and (along with Fichte's reputation for controversy) was surely the biggest reason for his initial popularity with the students there. Fichte wanted to *change* his listeners; and therefore he sought to *impress* them. Here too he was successful. The memoirs of former students contain many striking portraits of Fichte, almost all of which emphasize the extraordinary impression he made on his audience. Here are extracts from three such accounts, all by former students of Fichte's.

> Fichte really was an impressive person. Jokingly, I often called him "the Bonaparte of philosophy," and there are many similarities between the two. This small, broad-shouldered man did not stand calmly at his lecturn like a secular sage, but stood angrily and combatively. His unkept brown hair really stood out around the furrowed face, which resembled both the face

[42]Letter to Johanna Fichte, May 26, 1794. (Fichte's wife and father-in-law did not join him in Jena until later in the summer.)

[43]Forberg, *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren*, p. 63 (also quoted in *FvB*, p. 30).

[44]The little book *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* (translated below, Section IV) consists of the first five lectures from this series.

of an old woman and that of an eagle. Whether standing or striding about upon his sturdy legs, he was always firmly planted in the earth upon which he stood, secure and immovable in the sense of his own strength. No gentle word passed his lips, nor did any laughter. He seemed to have declared war upon the world which stood over against his I and to be concealing his lack of grace and dignity with harshness. This, anyway, is the way it seemed to me.[45]

His presentation was clear and concise, as was the man himself. He was physically small, but stocky and strong, with a well-formed head, high, bulging forehead, the gaze of an eagle—and the nose as well. His voice was sonorous and sharply delineated. . . . He held his lectures in the middle of a garden in the early hours from six to seven . . . normally just after he had been riding. He usually entered the garden hall carrying his riding whip and wearing boots and spurs, surrounded by shrubbery and flowers. He would climb to the lecturn so swiftly and vigorously that a hightened mood was immediately communicated to everyone.[46]

The demands which Fichte makes upon his students are so great that at first we almost lost all of our courage. What frightened us was mainly the newness and the unaccustomed character of the enterprise. But it gradually lost this character as we struggled and wrestled unceasingly with it. I hope that this step too will soon be behind us and that then we may expect to make more secure and independent progress in our search for truth. Anyone who fails to learn to think for himself under Fichte's direction will never learn to do so. Not a class goes by in which he does not warn us against regurgitation and an empty philosophy of words.[47]

These student impressions are borne out by the revealing description given by Fichte's colleague F. K. Forberg, who contrasted him with his predecessor as follows:

As regards the exterior of our philosopher: his basic character trait is supreme honesty, and such a trait is seldom accompanied by much delicacy and finesse. . . . His normal tone of voice is sharp and offensive; his speech is not beautiful, but all of his words have gravity and weight. He entirely lacks Reinhold's affectionate and devoted nature. His own first principles are strict and scarcely tempered with humanity. All the same, he is able to bear being contradicted—which Reinhold never could. And unlike Rein-

[45]Johann Georg Rist, *Lebenserinnerungen,* vol. I (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1880), p. 70 (also quoted in *FvB,* p. 65).

[46]Heinrich Schmidt, *Erinnerungen eines weimarischen Veteranen aus dem geselligen, literarischen und Theater-Leben* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1856), pp. 33–34.

[47]The author of this description was Johann Rudolf Steck. The passage is taken from "Ein Schweizer Student über Fichtes Vorlesungen in Jena," in *Wissen und Gewissen: Beiträgen zum 200. Geburstag Johann Gottlieb Fichtes,* ed. Manfred Buhr (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962), p. 285.

hold, he appreciates jokes. When challenged, he is fearsome, though he does not convey the mortifying sense of his own superiority that Reinhold did. His is a restless spirit; he thirsts for some opportunity to act in the world.

Fichte's public lectures do not flow as smoothly and pleasantly as Reinhold's; instead, he roars like a storm and discharges his lightning in individual bolts. Rather than moving one like Reinhold, he elevates the soul. It was obvious that Reinhold wished to make men good; Fichte wants to make them great. Reinhold had a gentle gaze and was a majestic figure; Fichte's gaze is withering, and his bearing defiant. Reinhold's philosophy was an endless polemic against Kantians and anti-Kantians; Fichte wants to employ his philosophy to guide the spirit of his age. . . . He possesses more wit, more acumen, more profundity, more spirit—in short, altogether more intellectual power—than Reinhold. Though his imagination does not blossom, it is energetic and strong. His images are not charming, but they are bold and great. He penetrates his subject to its inmost depths and roams through the conceptual realm with an ease which shows that in this invisible territory he is not merely at home: he rules it.[48]

Force of personality, however, was by no means the sole thing that Fichte relied upon to achieve his educational aims. From the moment of his arrival in Jena he began experimenting with novel approaches to teaching. For example, in order to relieve his students of the tedious task of taking detailed notes on his lectures, he decided to have the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* printed and distributed to his students. Another innovation, instituted shortly after his return from Osmannstädt, was a series of regular, informal meetings with students interested in philosophy. At these "*conservatoria,*" students could present their questions and objections, which Fichte would patiently try to answer. After becoming coeditor of the *Philosophisches Journal,* he instituted a competition for the best student essays on various topics. The winning essays were published in the *Journal,* and their authors received the usual honorarium. In the tradition-bound context of education in the German universities of the time, such innovations were startling. The high regard Fichte professed in *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* for the profession of teacher was not rhetorical overstatement; his actions at Jena show how sincerely he accepted this view of his own calling. If he spent more time and felt more comfortable in the company

[48]Forberg, *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren,* pp. 71–72. (also quoted in *FvB,* pp. 43–44). Of course not every published description of Fichte as a teacher was as glowing as those quoted above, though most are very positive. Still, some students found him rude, arrogant, and intolerant. One such (anonymous) listener recorded his disillusionment with Fichte on precisely these grounds in a curious book published in 1799 (in the midst of the atheism controversy), with no indication of publisher or place and titled *Vertraute unpartheische Briefe über Fichtes Aufenthalt in Jena, seinen Karakter als Mensch, Lehrer und Schriftsteller betreffend.* See esp. pp. 61–65.

of students than in that of his colleagues, this surely was in part a reflection of his contempt for those teachers who he felt dishonored the ideal he tried to embody.

Fichte's popularity with the students was not matched by a similar popularity with his colleagues. Though he was never without supporters in both Jena and Weimar, many powerful persons among the more conservative members of the faculty and the court opposed him from the start as an atheist and a Jacobin. But the hostility Fichte encountered cannot all be accounted for in this way, nor can it be reduced to the envy and resentment that his popular successes must undoubtedly have provoked. For in fact in many situations, especially those in which the qualities required were forebearance and tact, Fichte had no worse enemy than himself. As is glaringly evident from his contributions to some of the literary quarrels in which he soon became embroiled, he was very thin skinned, with a tendency to see all criticism as personal attack.[49] Too proud for compromise, he was always ready to turn any disagreement into a conflict over principle and to adopt an unbearably high moral tone. Admittedly, much of the public criticism of Fichte's writings was petty, abusive, vindictive, and mean spirited; moreover, he was correct in feeling that his enemies at Jena were always conspiring to discredit him. Nevertheless, he allowed himself to be drawn into conflicts and polemical quarrels far too often and too easily for his own good. Rudolf Steiner's diagnosis of the situation is marvelously apt:

> There was something violent about Fichte's manner of behavior. Again and again a peculiar pathos of ideas—which accompanied his scientific ideas just as much as his political ones—led him to seek the straightest and shortest route to the attainment of his goals. And when anything stood in his way, then his inflexibility turned into rudeness, and his energy into recklessness. He was never able to understand that old habits are stronger than new ideas; thus he was continually coming into conflict with the persons with whom he had to deal. The reason for most of the conflicts was that Fichte alienated people through his personality before he could make his ideas accessible to them. Fichte lacked the ability to put up with everyday life.[50]

[49]This remains true even after one has taken into consideration the customary tone in which such public disputes were carried on in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. A contemporary reader is likely to be shocked by the sarcasm and degree of personal abuse that were taken for granted in reviews and criticism during this era. Extracts from two samples of Fichte's polemical writings are included in this volume (below, Sections VIII and IX) and convey some idea of the level of invective which could be tolerated.

[50]Editor's remarks appended to "Sieben Briefe von Fichte an Goethe—zwei Briefe von Fichte an Schiller," *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 15(1894): 49.

Even before arriving at Jena, Fichte managed to become embroiled in a bitter public feud with one of his colleagues (the philosopher C. C. E. Schmid).[51] During the five years he spent in Jena, Fichte was not only engaged in preparing and delivering his lectures and in writing the books and essays upon which his fame, for the most part, continues to rest; he was also embroiled in nearly constant controversy. Indeed, the story of his career at Jena could readily be presented as a series of successively more serious "incidents"—culminating in the "atheism controversy" that led to his dismissal.

The first crisis proved to be a minor one, but Fichte's reaction to it is indicative of the attitude that eventually served him so poorly. Shortly after Fichte had arrived in Jena and assumed his new post, a rumor reached the court in Weimar that he had asserted in his public lectures that "in twenty or thirty years there will be no kings or princes anywhere."[52] C. G. Voigt, the court administrator in charge of academic affairs, recognized this rumor as malicious slander, instigated by the same parties at the university who had opposed Fichte's appointment on political grounds. At this point Fichte still enjoyed the full confidence of the administration and the court. Yet when he received word that the rumor in question had reached the court, he responded with a vigorous letter of self-defense in which he magnified the threat represented by the rumor and proclaimed his innocence.[53] Asserting that he would not be intimidated or silenced by pressure from Weimar (though none had been applied or even contemplated) and demanding the protection and support of the court (both of which he already enjoyed), he announced his intention to come to Weimar for a personal confrontation with his accusers. He further wrote that he would bring with him the written texts of the lectures in question and announced that he intended to have them printed at once—without the slighest alteration. The letter concluded with a thinly veiled threat to return to Zurich if assurances regarding all these points were not forthcoming. Fichte did travel to

[51]Schmid, who was also a "Kantian," was a regular full professor. The quarrel between Fichte and Schmid first arose over some harsh remarks Fichte made in his review of A. L. Creuzer's *Skeptische Betrachtungen über die Freiheit des Willens,* a review published in the fall of 1793. These remarks prompted a public protest and reply from Schmid, which, in turn, elicited a counterreply from Fichte. At first it seemed as if Fichte and Schmid would be able to reconcile their differences. (In a letter of May 26, 1794, to his wife, Fichte boasted that Schmid was attending his lectures and appeared to have been "won over.") The peace, however, proved short lasting, and the controversy between the two men became ever more violent, finally culminating in Fichte's scathing "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre.*"

[52]See Voigt's letter to Hufeland of June 13, 1794 (quoted in *FvB,* p. 17).

[53]Letter to Goethe, June 24, 1794.

Weimar, where his ruffled feathers were smoothed in a meeting with Voigt and Goethe. The lectures, titled *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation,* appeared in print as promised, and the first crisis passed without serious incident.[54]

The second crisis arose over Fichte's decision, in the winter semester of 1794–95, to schedule for Sunday mornings a continuation of his phenomenally popular public lecture series, "Morality for Scholars." To reach the largest possible audience he sought a time that would not conflict with other lectures or university events. The only time that seemed available was the hour on Sunday morning following the worship services in the municipal church and preceding those in the university church; accordingly he chose this hour for his lectures.

In the eyes of Fichte's conservative critics—including some powerful persons in the university senate—this act by an "enemy of throne and altar" amounted to a flagrant affront to the established religion and an offense against the law. Hoping to build this incident into a major scandal, they began spreading the rumor that Fichte intended to replace the Christian religion with a "cult of reason."[55] The local consistory met and formally accused Fichte of illegally violating the Sabbath and disturbing the public worship; these charges were then brought before the higher consistory in Weimar. As soon as he learned of these events, Fichte wrote another indignant letter to Goethe, again appealing for the protection of the court. The duke, who was personally sympathetic to Fichte, responded by ordering an investigation of the affair by the academic senate. Until their report was completed, however, the Sunday lectures were to be suspended.

Fichte wasted no time in drafting a lengthy and sharply worded account

[54]Indeed, Fichte regarded the outcome as a personal victory; not only did he receive the "assurance" he had demanded, but he received a surprisingly large honorarium from the publisher of *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation.* (Xavier Léon has pointed out that the amount Fichte was paid for his first books is a good indication of how in vogue he was after coming to Jena. Whereas more famous authors, such as Goethe and Schiller had to struggle to get five *louis d'or* per printer's sheet, Fichte easily got six for each sheet of *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation*—and even more for some other writings. See Léon, *Fichte et son temps,* I: 274.)

[55]The leading role in the conservative campaign against Fichte was taken by *Eudämonia, oder Deutsches Volksglück,* a somewhat scurrilous journal that, according to the declaration of its anonymous editors, was founded in order to combat all instigators of disorder and purveyors of principles dangerous to religion and the state. Defenders of the French Revolution and followers of the Enlightenment were especially singled out for attack in the pages of this journal. In an article published in 1796 in *Eudämonia,* "Verunglückter Versuch im christlichen Deutschlande eine Art von öffentlicher Vernunft-Religionsübung einzuführen," Fichte was accused of trying to turn his philosophy lecture hall into a "temple of reason." In the years that followed, *Eudämonia* continued to publish personal attacks on Fichte, reiterating the charge of atheism and accusing him of Jacobism as well. These attacks helped create the climate of opinion which led to the atheism controversy.

of his actions and reply to the charges against him.[56] In this report he argued that he had made inquiries before scheduling the series for Sunday, that Sunday lectures were not unprecedented, that they offended against no statute, and that, since the lectures were specifically concerned with the inculcation of virtue, they were especially well suited for Sunday presentation. He sent this report, along with a transcript of a previous lecture in the series, to the university senate, which, over the objections of his opponents, vindicated Fichte in its own report on the matter. In the wake of this official report, Fichte was directed by the court to resume his Sunday lectures. But this directive was not issued until the end of January 1795, by which time Fichte was embroiled in a new, even more bitter controversy. This new controversy led him to suspend his public lectures almost immediately after their resumption and led eventually to a period of self-imposed exile in Osmannstädt.

This third crisis, which began before the second was resolved, was provoked by Fichte's crusade against the student "orders" or fraternities. Though officially banned, three of these semisecret brotherhoods existed at Jena, where they exercised a profound influence over the lives of their members, other students, and, on occasion, the entire university and town. Not only did these organizations encourage drunkenness, debauchery, and (sometimes fatal) dueling among their members, but they were frequent disturbers of the peace and, on occasion, threats to public safety. They paid little respect to the rights of others, nor were they reluctant to employ intimidation and violence against their critics. In many respects these "orders" bore a closer resemblance to street gangs than to present-day student fraternities.[57]

[56]"Das Prof. Fichte Verantwortung, welche dem Bericht des Senatus academici ad serenissimum reg. beygelegt worden ist + Die am Ende des Winters [*sic;* actually summer] 1794 von Fichten gehaltens Schlussvorlesung als Beylage der Verantwortung." Though not intended by Fichte for publication, both the report and the lecture appeared in 1797 in the first issue of the journal *Blätter aus dem Archiv der Toleranz und Intoleranz.* The "Verantwortung" is included in *LB,* II: 21–36 (see also *AA* I, 4: 391–420).

[57]Léon describes these fraternities as "veritable mutual protection societies, whose secret organization was a constant threat to public safety, and which the university authorities and even the government—whether out of timidity or fear—did not dare to suppress." *Fichte et son temps,* I: 317. Without a proper appreciation of the genuine mayhem committed by the orders it is difficult to have a proper appreciation of Fichte's campaign against them and his consequent flight from Jena. The contemporary reader can gain some appreciation of the situation from the memoirs of a former student of Fichte's, Georg Rist. On pp. 51–52 of vol. I of his *Lebenserinnerungen,* Rist provides a graphic description of a series of student disturbances (though *riots* might be a better word) which occurred in Jena in June 1795. In the course of these conflicts citizens were assaulted on the street, the contents of several houses were destroyed, and there was a pitched battle between the municipal garrison and the students, in which one of the participants was fatally wounded. The town was subsequently occupied by five hundred troops, which provoked a countermobilization by the students. Thus when Fichte inveighed against the actions of the student fraternities it was not schoolboy pranks he had in mind.

Inevitably, the man who lectured on "Morality for Scholars" and who sincerely meant by his words and actions to improve the moral climate of the university and to combat the notorious corruption of student life would eventually recognize the deplorable influence of the fraternities and would work for their abolition. Fichte made no secret of his opposition to the student orders; not that he was the only member of the faculty to oppose these secret societies, but he was almost alone in his refusal to be intimidated by them. He spoke against them in public and with increasing vehemence and frequency. Unlikely as it seems, Fichte's efforts at persuasion were rewarded with temporary success: the groups agreed to disband in return for a promise of amnesty, negotiated with the court by Fichte himself. In the end, however, this plan fell through.[58] But Fichte's efforts to dissolve the orders continued, and when he resumed his public lectures in February 1795, he used these as a forum in his campaign against the fraternities. The recalcitrant members replied to Fichte's public pressure by launching their own campaign of harassment against him and his family. Beginning with disruptions of his classes and lectures, they next resorted to public insults to Fichte and his wife, and finally engineered a series of increasingly violent attacks on his home. Though an attempt at forcible entry failed, the house was stoned and Fichte's elderly father-in-law was very nearly killed by a paving stone that landed in his sickbed.[59]

As the intensity of this campaign of abuse and insult mounted, Fichte again turned to the court for assurances of his own safety and that of his family—assurances he had been unable to obtain from the university and municipal authorities. (Undoubtedly Fichte had again antagonized powerful elements by his behavior in this affair, particularly by his temerity in acting as the direct intermediary between the fraternities and the court, thus bypassing university and municipal authorities.) When the desired assurances were not immediately provided, Fichte reacted by discontinuing his public lectures and, shortly thereafter, fleeing Jena altogether for the physical and mental refuge of a house in the country, in the village of Osmannstädt, not far from Weimar. Canceling all of his

[58]Representatives of all three fraternities met with Fichte and expressed their willingness to disband, on the condition that Fichte act as intermediary between them and the court. (The fraternities, it must be recalled, were illegal, and the Weimar authorities had repeatedly and without success sought to eradicate them.) They entrusted their sealed books and membership lists to Fichte, who assumed the delicate task of negotiating amnesty for the members, as well as the official dissolution of the organizations. Fichte honorably resisted pressure from Weimar to turn over the sealed documents, but the mere rumor of the request was enough to arouse fresh suspicions in the minds of some of the members of the orders. Eventually, agreement was reached on all the terms and the groups agreed to dissolve. Two of them did (though they eventually reformed), but at the last minute one of the fraternities withdrew from the negotiations and refused to disband.

[59]This is the incident that prompted Goethe to quip that having a stone thrown through one's window is "the most unpleasant way possible to be convinced of the existence of the not-I." ("Tag-und-Jahres-Hefte" (1795), in *Goethes Werke,* XXXV: 53).

classes for the summer semester, he vowed not to return to the university until the situation had improved, the guilty students had been punished, and he had received adequate assurances of protection and support.

Once installed at Osmannstädt, Fichte was able to turn his entire attention to the philosophical and literary projects that had been somewhat—although by no means completely[60]—interrupted by the controversy over the Sunday lectures and the affair of the student fraternities. After composing a lengthy, self-justifying account of the circumstances surrounding his flight from Jena,[61] he devoted himself to completing two major philosophical treatises: Part II of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* and *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty.*[62] He also revised a few lectures from the "Morality for Scholars" series, recasting them in the form of "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy."[63] But the major project to which Fichte devoted his attention

[60]During the winter semester 1794–95, Fichte composed and published two articles. The first, "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" ("Ueber Belebung und Erhöhung des reinen Interesse für Wahrheit"), was a reworking of two lectures from the "Morality for Scholars" series for Schiller's new journal, *Die Horen.* The second, "Concerning the facility for language and the origin of language" ("Von der Sprachfähigkeit und dem Ursprung der Sprache") was published in the newly founded *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten* and was an original contribution to a debate as current in the late eighteenth century as it is today. The first essay is translated below in Section VI.

[61]Originally Fichte intended this "Rechenschaft an das Publikum über seine Entfernung von Jena in dem Sommerhalbjahre 1795" ("Public account of his departure from Jena in the summer semester of 1795") for publication. He sent it to Voigt, who, together with Fichte's wife, succeeded in dissuading him from publishing it. It was later included in *LB,* II: 43–75 (also in *AA* II, 3: 413–47; see too the account in Fichte's letter to Reinhold, July 2, 1795; below, section X, no. 16).

[62]The first portions of *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* were published in the summer of 1794 and were very closely based on Fichte's "private" lectures during that summer. In the winter semester of 1794–95 he gave private lectures on "Practical Philosophy" and "Theoretical Philosophy." Presumably, the two treatises published in the summer of 1795 are reworkings of these lectures. The *Foundations (Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre)* has been translated into English by Peter Heath and John Lachs in *Fichte: Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), pp. 87–286; henceforth, *H/L.* The *Outline (Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen)* is translated below in Section VII.

[63]Like the essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth," these "Letters" too were intended for publication in Schiller's *Horen.* To Fichte's surprise, however, Schiller rejected the first installment of "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" ("Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie: In einer Reihe von Briefen"). This provoked an outraged reply from Fichte (see below, Section X, no. 15), but the article never appeared in Schiller's journal, and Fichte never completed the series. Eventually, in 1800, he published the rejected "Letters" in his own *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten.* The three unpublished lectures on "Spirit and Letter" are translated below, Section V. The published "Letters" have been translated by Elizabeth Rubenstein, "On the Spirit and the Letter with Philosophy," in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel,* ed. David Simpson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 74–93.

during his stay in Osmannstädt was his renewed study of the issue of "natural law" or "natural rights," a study that focused on the relation of law to morality. The aim of this research was to construct a system of natural law which would not only be "in accord with" the principles and methods of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but which would represent the first application and extension of his new system, that is, the first step beyond the mere *Foundations.*

The summer in Jena had been tumultuous, marked by student riots, which led to the temporary military occupation of the town. But by the end of the summer the instigators of the violence had been punished, and Fichte had received the formal assurances of his safety that he had sought. Thus vindicated, he responded to the pleas of his students and returned to Jena in time for the beginning of the winter semester. Fichte's return, as described by one of those students, was triumphal.

> If, by the time of my arrival in Jena recent events had somewhat blunted the interest of the young in the French Revolution, it had nevertheless aroused an intellectual agitation, which sought to rediscover some form in the midst of the amazing disarray of all outer forms and inner approaches. In recent years Fichte had been more ardently admired and violently persecuted than any other public teacher. All the best minds were his followers. A chaotic world seemed to be trying to take on a new shape in the confident earnestness of his assertions, in the lofty goal of his research, and in the consistent rigor of his demonstrations. There was universal jubilation when we learned that he was returning to Jena from Osmannstädt and would be offering courses in the winter semester.[64]

After his return from Osmannstädt in the fall of 1795, Fichte managed for three years to avoid becoming a focus for the sort of local controversies that had plagued his first year at Jena. During these years he continued to enjoy immense popularity as a teacher and to exercise considerable influence among a portion of the students, but he no longer sought single-handedly to transform the university or to reform the student body. It is indicative of the change that when the last, most serious crisis erupted in winter 1798, the immediate cause was not something Fichte had said or done, but something he had written. After returning from Osmannstädt, Fichte devoted his considerable energies more exclusively than before to teaching and writing. In some respects his influence was greater than ever, though restricted more narrowly to serious students and readers of philosophical literature. Though Fichte never established a "school" of his own in the manner of some influential philosophers, his fame attracted many first-rate students to Jena and his writings began to win converts. Thus by 1798 he could say of his philoso-

[64]Rist, *Lebenserinnerungen,* I: 61–62.

phy: "Despite its terrible reception, this system nevertheless soon found a fate happier than that which has fallen to the lot of any other system: it has been adopted enthusiastically by several brilliant young minds, and, following long and mature examination, a celebrated veteran of philosophical literature has given it his approval."[65] Most of the "brilliant young minds" to whom Fichte here refers were associated with the emerging Romantic movement in Germany. Chief among these was the young Friedrich Schelling, who, after reading Fichte in 1794, fell for a time completely under his spell. Schelling's first published writings were brilliant presentations and interpretations of themes from Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre.* He acknowledged Fichte as his master and, with Fichte's assistance, joined the philosophy faculty at Jena in 1798.[66] Indeed, though Fichte himself cannot be considered a Romantic, his influence upon the ideology of the early Romantic school was decisive. Among the early Romantics who were personally influenced by Fichte at Jena were Novalis, Tieck, Hölderin, and—above all—Friedrich Schlegel, who became an enthusiastic student of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[67] Fichte himself must have taken even greater personal pleasure in the conversion to his party of that "celebrated veteran of philosophical literature," Karl Leonhard Reinhold, for whom Fichte's respect was second only to his veneration for Kant. The first, embryonic version of the *Wissenschafts-*

[65]From the preface to the new (1798) edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.*

[66]Schelling's first published writings, though seldom mentioning Fichte by name, were clearly written under the overpowering influence of Fichte's first presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* In September 1794, Schelling sent Fichte a copy of his first book, *Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt (On the Possibility of a Form for All Philosophy),* accompanied by a worshipful letter to "my venerated master." In a letter of December 1794 to his former college roommate, Hegel, Schelling hailed Fichte as "the new Copernicus." Schelling's next book, *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie (Of the I as Principle of Philosophy),* adhered so closely to Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* that the latter considered it "a commentary on my writings" (letter to Reinhold, July 2, 1795; translated below, Section X, no. 16). Nor were Fichte and Schelling alone in their perception of the similarities in their work; see, for example, Jens Baggesen's reference to Schelling as "the town-crier of the I" (letter to Eberhard, 1797; quoted in Léon, *Fichte et son temps,* I: 399). In Schelling's subsequent writings, however, major differences began to appear between his position and that of Fichte, differences that inevitably led to a break between the two men. Both of the above-mentioned essays by Schelling are available in English translations by Fritz Marti in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge: Four Early Essays (1794–1796)* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1980). An excellent account of the Fichte-Schelling relationship may be found in Walter Schulz's introduction to his edition of the *Fichte-Schelling Briefwechsel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1968).

[67]Fichte's influence upon the early Romantics, especially F. Schlegel, has been much studied. See especially Rudolf Haym, *Die romantische Schule* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977; rpt. of 1870 ed.), pp. 214–18; Léon, *Fichte et son temps,* I: 440–69; Roger Ayrault, *La genèse du romantisme allemand,* vols. I and II (Paris: Aubier, 1961). In English, see Oskar Walzel, *German Romanticism,* trans. Alma Elise Lussky (New York: Capricorn Books, 1966), pp. 25–30; and H. A. Korff, "Kant Romanticized by Fichte," in *The Romantic Movement,* ed. A. K. Thorlby (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), pp. 107–12.

lehre had, after all, been cast in the form of "personal meditations" on Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy. The correspondence between the two men began in 1794 and continued throughout the Jena years. Fichte astutely saw his correspondence with his eminent predecessor as a perfect opportunity to test his own ideas. What could be a more convincing demonstration of the truth of the *Wissenschaftslehre* than to win over to it the distinguished founder of the Elementary Philosophy? The two men were united by a common allegiance to transcendental idealism, a shared awareness of the tensions in Kant's writings, and a willingness to go beyond the letter of Kant's philosophy in their attempts to resolve these tensions; where they disagreed was over how far beyond Kant one had to go. Though Reinhold was naturally intent on defending his own position against that of the younger man, he remained open to criticism and willing to give Fichte's writings the most careful consideration. Fichte could not have asked for a better-prepared reader or a more sympathetic critic. Reinhold candidly shared with Fichte his reservations and questions concerning the latter's writings, and Fichte replied with long, detailed explanations and answers. Fichte's letters to Reinhold contain some of the clearest statements he ever produced of his basic ideas, and for that reason they remain invaluable sources for students of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. At last Fichte's efforts were rewarded: first privately, and then with great public fanfare, Reinhold renounced his previous position and announced his conversion to the standpoint of Fichte's new system.[68]

In his remaining years at Jena, Fichte continued the practice, begun in his first year, of using his advanced classes for developing his own philosophy. Indeed, most of Fichte's major writings are revised versions of his private lectures. Nevertheless, though he declined to resume the sort of universitywide "public lectures" which had been so successful—albeit controversial—the first year, he did not limit his teaching to advanced students. On the contrary, he proved innovative in his approach to beginning students as well, instituting—in addition to the previously mentioned *conservatoria,* or discussion groups—a truly introductory course in philosophy.[69] These were among the first modern attempts to teach

[68]The most important of Fichte's letters to Reinhold are all translated below in Section X; see especially nos. 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 22, and 23. Reinhold first announced his conversion in a letter to Fichte of February 14, 1797. A few months later he made his new allegiance public for the first time in the preface to the new edition of his prize essay "Progress in Metaphysics" ("Versuch über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik") included in the second part of his *Vermischten Schriften.* But his most important and influential public pronouncement upon Fichte came a year later, in January 1798, in the long and admiring retrospective review of Fichte's writings which he contributed to the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.*

[69]The usual title for this introductory class was Logic and Metaphysics. The title of the course derives from the titles of the two main parts of the book which Fichte employed as his text: Ernst Platner's *Philosophische Aphorismen,* Part I. Platner was a professor at Leipzig, and the attitudes championed in his book were resolutely anti-idealist and anti-Kantian.

philosophy through discussion and active participation, rather than solely through reading texts and attending lectures.[70]

Fichte's literary production during these years was prodigous, including major new treatises on the philosophy of law and ethics, the start of a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and major essays on a variety of topics—not to mention new editions of his previously published "foundational" works, a steady stream of minor reviews, announcements, and critical notices, his extensive philosophical correspondence, or his work as coeditor of the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten.*[71] Most of these writings fall into one (or more) of three categories. Some are continuations of the effort already begun to lay before the public the basic outline of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Others are more polemical in character, often prompted by specific instances of hostile criticism. The third category includes those writings in which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is extended and developed by applying its principles and methods to entirely new subject areas, such as law, ethics, and religion. In their different ways, these types of writings shared a common goal. They were all part of an attempt to articulate and to elaborate the *Wissenschaftslehre:* to erect something upon the foundations laid in 1794–95, while at the same time reexamining and strengthening those very foundations.

In light of the volume's subsequent history and influence, it is important to recall that Fichte never intended the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* to be more than the subtitle of the first edition pro-

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Instead, Platner was the proponent of an empirical and antispeculative view of philosophy, one that resembles in several ways the "common sense philosophy" and "philosophical naturalism" of the twentieth century. The reason Fichte chose Platner's book as his text is that he realized that views like Platner's were likely to be congenial to his beginning students and would certainly strike them as far more plausible than his own version of transcendental idealism. The strategy of the course was to encourage the students to discuss and to criticize Platner's position—thereby facilitating their own transition from the "natural" to the "philosophical" viewpoint. Fichte first offered this course, in response to student request, in the winter semester of 1794–95. He resumed it upon his return to Jena and taught it every semester thereafter. This introductory-level course proved as popular as it was innovative; the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* reported that in the winter semester of 1798–99 Fichte had 290 regular students in this class, and sometimes as many as 400—this for a class that met at six in the morning. This is reported in the editor's foreword to the new critical edition of Fichte's lecture notes on Platner which comprise *AA* II, 4a. A complete student transcript of Fichte's lectures on Logic and Metaphysics is also available in *AA* IV, 1 and 2; 173–450.

[70]On Fichte's role as an innovator in the teaching of philosophy, see *LB,* I: 223–34, and Wundt, *Die Philosophie an der Universität Jena,* pp. 232ff. For a complete list of all the courses Fichte taught during his career at Jena, see appendix to the introduction.

[71]This journal was founded shortly after Fichte's arrival in Jena, by his colleague F. I. Niethammer, and Fichte was a regular contributor to it from the start. He became coeditor in the summer of 1796 (though this was not officially announced until the first issue of 1797). In return for this large responsibility, Fichte acquired a forum for defending his system and a ready vehicle for his comments on the lively philosophical scene in Germany. This is not to say that the *Philosophisches Journal* was ever a narrowly partisan organ of "Fichteanism"; on the contrary, it published many articles critical of Fichte.

claims, namely, "a manual for the use of his listeners." However important it may be as Fichte's first and best-known attempt to present his own system, this hastily written and published set of lecture notes was never meant to be a definitive presentation of Fichte's new philosophy; indeed, he expressed dissatisfaction with it from the first.[72] In October 1794 the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* published an announcement of Part I of the *Foundations*. This advertisement (almost certainly written by Fichte himself) included the following caution:

> The author believes that he owes it to the public to declare explicitly that the present work, which grew out of his lectures, is incomplete in his own eyes. It will still be several years before he can hope to present this work to the public in a worthy form. Until then, he requests that the book be considered no more than a manuscript which the author had printed for the convenience of his students, considering that preferable to having them copy it down as he lectured. It is for this reason that he is reluctant to see it submitted to public criticism.

Less than a year later, soon after completing the second part of the *Foundations,* as well as the supplementary *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty,* Fichte had already come to view the forecast included in the above announcement as far too optimistic. After explaining the unfavorable circumstances under which the *Foundations* was written and distinguishing between his valid ideas and his imperfect presentation of the same, he adds: "As I see it, the presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* will require by itself an entire lifetime."[73] As it turned out, even an entire lifetime proved insufficient for Fichte's task, and, despite his heroic efforts and the many entirely new versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* which he composed for his own use and that of his students, none of these new presentations appeared in complete form during his lifetime.[74] There-

[72]In July 1794, i.e., while engaged in writing the *Foundations,* Fichte wrote to his old friend Friedrich Weisshuhn, with respect to its style and form, "you will not be satisfied with the textbook that I am presently writing. . . . I could indeed have written better, but I had to let it pass. since the printer needed the manuscript and I needed a textbook for my lectures." (See similar complaints in the letters to Goethe of June 21, 1794, which is translated below in Section X, no. 11, and September 30, 1794.) Just after the publication of the *Outline* and Part II of the *Foundations,* in a letter to his wife, he insisted on the provisional character of his writings, adding that "not a single letter of my system is presented in a way it shall *remain*" (letter to Johanna Fichte, September 27, 1795).

[73]Letter to Reinhold, July 2, 1795 (translated below, Section X, no. 16). Also see the letter to Jens Baggesen, April–May 1795 (translated below in Section X, no. 13).

[74]While at Jena, in the years following the publication of the *Foundations,* Fichte continued to lecture on the first principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* In conjunction with these lectures he developed an entirely new way of presenting his ideas on the subject. The fragmentary *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre,* which Fichte began publishing in 1797 in the *Philosophisches Journal,* as well as the so-called *Wissenschaftlehre nova methodo* (complete student transcripts of Fichte's 1796–99 lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre*) document this attempt at a new presentation.

fore, it is not surprising that Fichte's contemporaries as well as subsequent generations of readers have tended to identify the *Wissenschaftslehre* with Fichte's first (and only) full public presentation of it in the *Foundations*. This, however, is unfortunate; for, as Fichte came to see more and more clearly, without the oral explanations provided in class, this "manuscript for the use of his listeners" lent itself all too easily to misunderstandings—if, indeed, it could be understood at all.[75] Con-

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After leaving Jena in 1799, Fichte devoted several years to popular expositions of his philosophy, including what is perhaps his best-known work in English translation, *The Vocation of Man* (1800). Work on a new formal presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was, however, by no means discontinued. In 1801 Fichte announced that a new presentation of his philosophy would soon be published. After several times postponing the appearance of the new presentation, Fichte seems to have abandoned entirely his plans for a new exposition of the first principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and to have turned instead to private lectures (at Erlangen and Berlin) as his preferred means of presenting the successive new versions of his philosophy. The only published hint Fichte provided of these new versions was a very brief (and incredibly difficult) little essay which appeared in 1810 under the title "Die Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem allgemeinen Umrisse"; Walter E. Wright, trans., "The Science of Knowledge in Its General Outline," *Idealistic Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1976): 106–17.

Fichte's literary remains (*Nachlass*) include many different complete presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*—over twenty, according to the editor in chief of the new edition of his work—though many are yet unpublished. See Reinhard Lauth, "Arbeiten an den Werken Johann Gottlieb Fichtes," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 11(1957): 132. Recent research on Fichte has concentrated more and more on illuminating these important but obscure unpublished versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, with major attention directed to the versions of 1801 and 1804. But the versions of 1796–99, 1810, 1812, and 1813 have also begun to receive their share of critical scrutiny.

Though in some respects eclipsed by recent scholarship, the best overall discussion of the various versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is still Martial Guéroult's two-volume work, *L'évolution et la structure de la doctrine de la science chez Fichte* (Paris: Société de l'Edition, 1930.) Still valuable too is Max Wundt's analysis of the same issue in his *Fichte-Forschungen* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1929). Though no contemporary scholars have treated the question of the evolution of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* with the scope of these two earlier authors (preferring instead to concentrate on specific versions or to compare two or three different versions), the following recent books make important contributions to the discussion of the evolution of Fichte's philosophy: Dieter Henrich, *Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1967), English translation by David R. Lachterman, "Fichte's Original Insight," in *Contemporary German Philosophy*, vol. I (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 15–53; Wolfgang Janke, *Fichte: Sein und Reflexion—Grundlagen der kritischen Vernunft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970); Hans Radermacher, *Fichtes Begriff des Absoluten* (Frankfort: Klostermann, 1970); Karl Schuhmann, *Die Grundlage der Wissenschaftslehre in ihrem Umrisse* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968); Ingeborg Schüssler, *Die Auseinandersetzung von Idealismus und Realismus in Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1972); Günter Schulte, *Die Wissenschaftslehre des späten Fichtes* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1971); and Joachim Widmann, *Johann Gottlieb Fichte: Einführung in seine Philosophie* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982).

[75]At the beginning of the "First Introduction" to the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), Fichte alludes to this problem by remarking: "In pursuit of my academic duties, I at first wrote for my students in the classroom, where I had it in my power to continue with verbal explanations until I was understood" (*SW*, I: 419; English translation in *H/L*, p. 3). This becomes a recurrent theme in Fichte's correspondence during the ensuing years. See, e.g., his remarks on this subject in his letters to L. H. Jacob (March 4, 1799) and J. E. C. Schmidt (March 17, 1799), which are translated in Section X, nos. 24 and 25. But his clearest pronouncement on this topic occurs near the end of the advertisement he published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in 1801 announcing a new

vinced of this point, Fichte proceeded not to renounce this first presentation of his views, but to insist upon the distinction between the principles and ideas of the *Wissenschaftslehre* on the one hand and the particular form in which he had first presented them on the other. The insights, he insisted, remained valid, even if the particular form in which they were presented was defective.

"My theory should be expounded in an infinite number of ways. Everyone will have a different way of thinking this theory—and must think it differently, in order to be thinking *this very theory*. . . . How many more times will I revise my presentation! Nature has compensated me for my lack of precision by giving me a multiplicity of perspectives and a fairly agile mind." As this passage from Fichte's letter to Reinhold of July 2, 1795, makes plain, Fichte's strategy was to make a virtue of necessity: not to seek the "definitive" presentation which had eluded him the first time, but to provide instead a variety of different presentations—all considered as different paths to the same truth. To employ a distinction Fichte himself loved to make with respect to Kant: the task became that of presenting the unitary *spirit* of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in a variety of different *letters*—the more the better. In accordance with this plan, Fichte continued to lecture on the fundamental principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but he did so in his own words, "as if I had never worked it out at all, and as if I knew nothing about the older presentation."[76] The first new version dispensed with the highly abstract starting point of the *Foundations* ($A = A$) and began instead with the fact (or act) of self-consciousness. The division into "theoretical" and "practical" parts was

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presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Though the announced book never appeared, the announcement (which is reprinted in part in *AA* I, 2: 190) remains valuable as an indication of Fichte's attitude toward his own published writings. It includes the following declaration: "For six years the *Wissenschaftslehre* has been lying before the German public. It has received a very diverse reception from various people. For the most part it has found vehement and passionate opponents—though it has also found some incompetent eulogists, as well as a few bright adherents and elaborators. For five years now I have had in my desk a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* which I have employed in my lectures. This winter I am busy revising this new presentation, and I hope to be able to publish it this coming spring. I wish very much for the public to accept from me on a *provisional* basis (i.e., until it becomes possible for them to convince themselves of the matter) the following two assurances: First, with the exception of a few individuals (and of my immediate listeners, with whom I am not here concerned), there is to be found among the educated public so good as *no* knowledge *whatsoever* of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Second, this science is a thoroughly *new discovery,* the very idea of which did not exist until now. The idea of this science itself occurs only within the context of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and can only be judged in its own terms. Concerning the first point, the book which appeared six years ago as a manuscript for the use of my students, bearing the title *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* has, to the best of my knowledge, not been understood at all, and (apart from my immediate listeners) no one has made any use of it. The book in question does not appear able to dispense with oral assistance."

[76]Letter to Reinhold, March 21, 1797 (see below, Section X, no. 22).

also dropped. But he insisted that, despite the striking differences in form, this "*Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*" was only an alternative way of presenting the same philosophical standpoint previously presented in the *Foundations* and *Outline*. On the basis of this revised version of his lectures, he began to compose an *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre,* two long introductions to which, along with the first chapter, were published in installments in the *Philosophisches Journal* in 1797–98.[77]

Fichte's attempts to expound and explain his philosophy in the years following his return to Jena from Osmannstädt were, however, hardly confined to his new lectures on its fundamental principles and the publication of the fragmentary *Attempt at a New Presentation.* Indeed, he seldom lost an occasion to summarize the main points of his position or to offer explanatory comments designed to provide readers of the *Foundations* with the sort of supplementary elucidation and explanation he was accustomed to providing for his own students. Thus, to take just two of the many examples, the primarily polemical essay "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*" (1796) contains one of Fichte's clearest statements of the aims, method, and overall character of his philosophy,[78] and his major treatise on philosophy of law, *Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1796–97),[79] commences with an extended discussion of the nature of the I and its free activity, a discussion that greatly expands upon and elucidates Fichte's remarks on the same subject in part II of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*

Just as most of Fichte's polemical writings included substantial discussions of theoretical questions, so his more specifically theoretical treatises were increasingly likely to contain passages displaying the most obvious partisanship and hypersensitivity toward criticism. Indeed, an unpredictable oscillation between bone-dry exposition and rhetorical tantrums is one of the most distinctive elements of Fichte's style as an author.[80]

[77]See *SW,* I: 419–534; *AA* I, 4: 183–281. See below, Section X, no. 22. The two "Introductions" are available in English translation in *H/L,* pp. 3–85.

[78]See below, Section VIII.

[79]*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre.* An unreliable English translation by A. E. Kroeger is available under the title *The Science of Rights* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1869).

[80]In his exchange of letters with Fichte following the rejection of the latter's manuscript "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy," Schiller neatly diagnosed the difficulty with Fichte's prose style: "What I demand, above all else, of a good presentation is uniformity of tone, and—if the presentation is to have aesthetic value as well—an *interaction* between images and concepts, but not an *alternation* between the one and the other (as occurs frequently in your 'Letters'). You thrust the reader directly from the most abstruse abstractions right into harangues: this is the source of the unseemliness in your writing. Even in your earlier writings people were offended by this

Furthermore, his willingness to reply aggressively to every unfavorable comment and in doing so to assume a tone as personal and petty as his most hostile critics struck many readers as an unnecessary offense against civility. Even his friends and supporters were sometimes made uncomfortable by the occasional sharpness of Fichte's pen and his over-defensive attitude toward his own writings. When Reinhold dared—ever so gently—to reproach him on this subject, his reply was characteristic:

> You say that my tone offends and wounds persons whom it does not concern. I sincerely regret this; nevertheless, it does concern them to the extent that they do not wish to let someone tell them honestly what terrible errors they usually embrace, and to the extent that they do not want to accept a bit of shame as the price for some very important instruction. Certainly the *Wissenschaftslehre* can have nothing at all to do with anyone who does not value truth above everything else—including his petty individual self. The *internal* reason for my assuming the tone in question is this: whenever I have to witness the prevailing loss of any sense of truth and the current deep obscurantism and wrongheadedness, I am filled with a contempt that I cannot describe. The *external* reason for my tone is the way these people have treated me and continue to treat me. There is nothing that I desired less than to engage in polemics. Why couldn't they . . . keep their peace?[81]

Fichte and his writings were indeed subjected to much spiteful and personally motivated public criticism, but he was apparently unable to resist repaying such critics in kind: he was not the man to let an insult—real or imagined—go unnoticed or unreturned. Equally intemperate was his reaction to the widespread misunderstanding of his philosophy. Here again, Fichte's writings, and consequently his theories, were indeed widely misinterpreted (and still are); nevertheless, it seems never to have crossed his mind that someone could understand his writings and *still* not agree with his conclusions. Fichte was willing to take some of the blame for the failure of his philosophy to win universal acceptance—but only to the extent of admitting that there may have been defects in his specific manner of presenting his views. Only irreparable obtuseness or sheer intransigence could, he was convinced, prevent a reader from

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defect, which here returns in magnified form" (Schiller to Fichte, June 24, 1794. This letter, which survives only in drafts, is published in *AA* III, 2: 334–35).

This, however, is not to deny that Fichte's prose style has its strengths as well as its weaknesses. The merits are those of *Sturm und Drang* and show themselves at their best in those texts where inspired rhetoric seems not out of place. Fichte was a celebrated orator, and for a reader willing to use a bit of imagination the printed texts of Fichte's public speeches still make stirring reading. See, for example, *Concerning Human Dignity* and *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation,* which are translated below, Sections II and IV. Both the young Hölderlin and the young Friedrich Schlegel expressed admiration for Fichte's style as a lecturer and author (see *FvB,* pp. 27 and 56–57).

[81]Letter to Reinhold, March 21, 1797. Translated below in Section X, no. 22.

assenting to an adequate presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Eventually this attitude drove him to give one of his later, popular presentations of his philosophy the pathetic title "A Crystal Clear Report to the Public at Large concerning the True Nature of the Most Recent Philosophy: An Attempt to Force the Reader to Understand."[82]

Even when his fame and influence were at their height, there was never any lack of public criticism of his writings and philosophy. For nearly a decade, Fichte's radical revision of Kant's transcendental philosophy was near the center of the philosophical stage in Germany, but the sniping from the wings only intensified during this time. The anti-Kantians (represented chiefly by the followers of Enlightenment rationalism, whose organ was the *Göttingsche Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*) heaped abuse on Fichte's writings, which in their eyes only served to reveal more clearly than ever the weaknesses of the Critical Philosophy. At the same time, the more orthodox Kantians (such as J. S. Beck, whose party was identified with the *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophischen Geistes,* a journal edited at Halle by L. H. Jacob) reviled Fichte for his departures from Kant's Critical Philosophy. These were by no means the only philosophical journals to publish reviews and articles critical of Fichte, though the attacks they published were exceptionally partisan, unrelenting, and, at times, outrageously personal. Given Fichte's own attitude toward the public reception of his writings, it is not surprising that he kept a watchful eye on the published criticism of his work—or that he reacted with wounded indignation to most of it. As coeditor of the *Philosophisches Journal,* he published regular "reviews" of other journals and was not reluctant to publish articles of his own specifically addressed to instances of public criticism he considered uninformed or unjust (a category that, in his eyes, included almost all criticism of his writings).[83]

[82]*Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publikum, über das eigentliche Wesen der neuesten Philosophie: Ein Versuch, die Leser zum Verstehen zu zwingen* (1801; rpt. *SW,* II: 323–420). English translation by A. E. Kroeger, "Sun-Clear Statement," in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2, nos. 1–3 (1868); 3–18, 65–82, 129–40. Perhaps the best comment on this unfortunate feature of Fichte's personality was provided by Julius Ebbinghaus in his essay "Fichtes ursprüngliche Philosophie," reprinted in *Gesammelte Aufsätze, Vorträge und Reden* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), p. 211: "Fichte was not satisfied merely to present the insight he had achieved and to allow it to have its own effect. Instead, he was motivated just as much by a concern for people's position in relation to this insight and the need for the entire world to submit to the necessity of his thoughts as he was by the question of truth itself. Fichte's sole blind spot regarding himself was that he never realized that underlying all of his speeches (and, at bottom, all the works he left behind are nothing but speeches) was a will to dominate the thoughts of men—a will which, on occasion, dispensed neither with threats nor with scorn directed at those who were unwilling to submit. This also explains why throughout his life the complaints of his friends as well as his foes concerning his manner of addressing them remained as incomprehensible to him as the true reason for the many conflicts within which he dwelt."

[83]Substantial excerpts from two of these polemical articles are translated in this volume, Sections VIII and IX, "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschafts-*

In the "Hypothetical Division of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" with which Fichte concluded the prospectus of his philosophy written in the spring of 1794, the presentation is divided into theoretical and practical parts. Of the latter Fichte said: "In this second part the foundations are laid for new and thoroughly elaborated theories of the pleasant, the beautiful, the sublime, the free obedience of nature to its own laws, God, so-called 'common sense' or the natural sense of truth, and finally, for new theories of natural law and morality, the principles of which are material as well as formal."[84] Accordingly, as soon as he had completed the first, detailed exposition of the first principles of his system (in the *Foundations* and the *Outline*), Fichte turned at once to the project of extending the *Wissenschaftslehre* by applying its principles and methods to the various fields mentioned above.

The first such "extension," begun while Fichte was in self-exile in Osmannstädt during the summer semester of 1795, was into the realm of what is called in German *Philosophie des Rechts,* and which might be variously rendered as "philosophy of right," "philosophy of law," or even "political philosophy." He taught a course on this subject immediately after returning from Osmannstädt and continued to offer regular lectures on Philosophy of Right for the rest of his career at Jena. Out of those lectures grew a major book, *Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre.* Published in two installments, in 1796 and 1797, this book had an impact on Fichte's contemporaries which was as profound as that of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* itself. Indeed, in some ways the *Foundations of Natural Right* is the more original book. The aim of this ambitious treatise is to show the independence of so-called natural rights (along with the entire field of law and politics) from moral considerations. This is accomplished by a transcendental deduction that shows how natural rights are, ultimately, conditions for the possibility of self-consciousness; in other words, the *Foundations of Natural Right* is, in the strictest sense, a true extension of the argument of the *Foundation of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.* The link between self-consciousness and natural rights turns out to be intersubjectivity, or the social character of human life. Fichte "deduces" the concept of right by showing it to be a condition for the possibility of intersubjectivity, which is itself transcendentally deduced as the condi-

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lehre" and "Annals of Philosophical Tone." The former essay is the one that concludes with Fichte's notorious declaration of his opponent's nonexistence. The latter, which includes a few pages of nearly surreal ranting, provides the reader accustomed to polite present-day conventions of philosophical argument with an especially vivid glimpse of the quite different conventions of the late eighteenth century.

[84]See below, Section III, pp. 133–35. This "Hypothetical Division" was omitted from the second edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.*

tion necessary for the possibility of self-consciousness. The state, in turn, is interpreted as the condition necessary for the actual existence of the rights thereby deduced, and thus the necessity of the state is deduced as well. This ingenious argument, which has no precise parallel in Kant's writings on practical philosophy, profoundly influenced Hegel and had an important impact upon the subsequent history of European social philosophy.[85]

The next subject Fichte set about assimilating to his systematic standpoint was ethics, on which he first lectured in the summer semester of 1796. From these lectures too there came a major treatise, *The System of Ethical Theory according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre,* which was published in the spring of 1798.[86] In this work Fichte attempts to derive, from the mere idea of reason, not just the form but also the content of the moral law. *The System of Ethical Theory* is thus far more than a variation on Kantian themes; like the *Foundations of Natural Right,* it is especially noteworthy for the explicitly *social* twist it gives to Kantian moral theory. Also as in the previous book, the argument of *The System of Ethical Theory* is tied directly into the argument of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* and greatly illuminates the central argument of the latter.

Fichte's original plans for the further extension of the *Wissenschaftslehre* into the fields of aesthetics. philosophy of nature, and philosophy of religion did not mature as he had expected.[87] Philosophy of religion was of course the field in which he had made his philosophical debut,

[85]Some hint of Fichte's treatment of this topic may be gained from the selection from the "Annals of Philosophic Tone" translated in Section IX below. A classic study of the relation of Fichte's views on society and natural rights to his transcendental philosophy is Wilhelm Weischedel's *Der Aufbruch der Freiheit zur Gemeinschaft: Studien zur Philosophie des jungen Fichtes* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1939). Two recent books that focus on Fichte's theory of intersubjectivity are Hans Duesberg, *Person und Gemeinschaft: Philosophisch-Systematische Untersuchungen des Sinnzusammenhangs von personaler Selbständigkeit und interpersonaler Beziehung an Texten von J. G. Fichte und M. Buber* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1970); and C. K. Hunter, *Der Interpersonalitätsbeweis in Fichtes früher angewandter praktischer Philosophie* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1973).

[86]*Das System der Sittenlehre nach den Principien der Wissenschaftslehre* (*SW,* IV: 1–365; *AA* I, 5: 19–317). English translation by A. E. Kroeger, *The Science of Ethics as Based on the Science of Knowledge,* ed. W. T. Harris (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897).

[87]According to Fichte's son, I. H. Fichte, the fully developed system of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was supposed to include the subdisciplines of philosophy of right, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion (see *LB,* I: 229–30). According to the senior editor of *AA,* Reinhard Lauth, the philosophy of art was not included in Fichte's "ideal plan" for the fourfold division of the "material content of knowledge" into the theory of nature, theory of right, theory of ethics, and theory of religion (see *AA* I, 1: xi). Fichte never wrote anything on the philosophy of nature while in Jena or thereafter, though scattered comments on this subject can be gleaned from his writings. Some idea of his views on aesthetics and art may be gained from the letter to Berger of October 11, 1796 (translated below, Section X, no. 21) and the previously mentioned "Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy."

and one upon which his lectures and writings often touched—or seemed to touch.[88] But a systematic treatment of the philosophy of religion "according to the principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" remained to be written. While still at Jena, Fichte made plans for just such a project. Thus he announced for the summer semester of 1799 his first lectures on the philosophy of religion. But by the time that semester began, the atheism controversy had erupted, and Fichte was no longer a member of the faculty at Jena.

The controversy that eventually led to Fichte's dismissal was sparked by two articles published in the *Philosophisches Journal* in the fall of 1798. Fichte's former colleague at Jena, Friedrich Karl Forberg (who had since become assistant headmaster of a secondary school at Saalfeld), was the author of one of these articles, titled "The Development of the Concept of Religion."[89] Forberg himself was a Kantian of a rather skeptical and antispeculative bent, and his essay dismisses all theoretical discussion of religious topics. Religion, according to Forberg, is strictly equivalent to the practical belief in a moral world-order—a belief expressed solely through moral actions based upon conscience and thus providing no warrant for any theoretical assertions concerning the existence of God, immortality, and so forth. Struck by the superficial and misleading similarity between his own views and those presented in Forberg's essay, Fichte (coeditor of the *Philosophisches Journal*) encouraged him to withdraw it. When Forberg persisted, Fichte agreed to its publication, but decided to contribute to the same issue an essay of his own clarifying his views on the same topic. In this essay "On the Foundation of Our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe,"[90] Fichte accepts the Kantian strictures on any theoretical knowledge of a religious sort, but tries to avoid the appearance of religious skepticism found in Forberg's article. Rather than rejecting as nonsense all talk of God and leaving it to faith to leap where argument fails, Fichte's essay *identifies* God with the moral

[88]Especially in his "introductory" course, on Logic and Metaphysics, Fichte addressed himself to religious topics. Such remarks appear to have served as the source for the severely edited text of two of his lectures "on God and immortality" which were published, without his knowledge or permission, during the atheism controversy (*Etwas von dem Herrn Professor Fichte und für ihn, herausgegeben von einem wahrheitliebenden Schulmeister*). Later these two lectures were reprinted under the title *J. G. Fichte über Gott und Unsterblichkeit*, ed. Ernst Bergmann (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1914). For further discussion, see *AA* II, 4a: 6.

[89]"Entwicklung des Begriffs der Religion," *Philosophisches Journal* 8, no. 1 (1798): 21–46. This, like the other major documents of the atheism controversy, was conveniently reprinted in a collection edited by Hans Lindau, *Die Schriften zu J. G. Fichte's Atheismus-Streit* (Munich: G. Müller, 1912.)

[90]"Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung" (*SW*, V: 175–89; *AA* I, 5: 347–57). English translation by Paul Edwards, in *19th Century Philosophy*, ed. Patrick L. Gardiner (New York: Free Press, 1969), pp. 19–26.

world-order. Thus the same duty that obliges us to act morally also obliges us to acknowledge the reality of God (i.e., the moral world-order, or Kant's "kingdom of ends"). Though we lack theoretical knowledge of God, belief in God is absolutely necessary and provides us with the only absolute certainty we can have. Upon this single certainty all of our other relative certainties are, in turn, based—including our belief in sensible things.[91]

Whatever the merits of the views presented by Forberg and Fichte (and whatever the differences between them), the two articles quickly became the object of violent and rapidly escalating public controversy. An anonymous pamphlet, with the self-explanatory title "A Father's Letter to His Son Concerning Fichte and Forberg's Atheism," especially further inflamed the situation. Fichte's conservative opponents, once again led by anonymous contributors to the journal *Eudämonia,* lost no time in taking advantage of this new opportunity to renew their attacks on him as an enemy of throne and alter. The matter was brought to the attention of the Saxon government in Dresden, and, in November 1798, Friedrich-August, prince-elector of Saxony, issued a rescript condemning the issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* containing the two controversial essays. All copies of the offensive issue were ordered confiscated, and educators were alerted to be especially careful about expressing any opinions that might tend to undermine the established religion. In a separate letter of December 18, addressed to the dukes of Saxe-Weimar, the Dresden authorities went even further: punishment was demanded for the authors of the two essays and for the editors of the *Philosophisches Journal.* This demand was backed up with a threat to prevent all Saxon students from attending the University of Jena.

With these official developments, the die was cast. The lines of controversy were drawn as sharply as possible, with utter disregard for any differences between Forberg's views and Fichte's, or between the opinions expressed in Fichte's controversial essay and the contents of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* All that seemed to matter was whether one was pro- or anti-Fichte. The *Atheismusstreit* turned into a major controversy, which for a while held the attention of all of Germany and whose consequences continued to be felt for many years. Friedrich Schlegel spoke for most

[91] Fichte returned to this line of argument—and worked it out with much greater care—in 1800 in the third book of *The Vocation of Man.* For a discussion of his views on religion at the time of the atheism controversy, see especially Emanuel Hirsch's essay, "Fichtes Gotteslehre, 1794–1802," in *Die idealistische Philosophie und das Christentum* (Gütersloh: Bertelsman, 1926), pp. 140–307; Heinrich Rickert, "Fichtes Atheismusstreit und die Kantische Philosophie," *Kant-Studien* 4(1899–1900): 137–66; and Hans Michael Baumgartner, "Über das Gottesverständis der Transzendentalphilosophie: Bemerkungen zum Atheismusstreit von 1798–99," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch,* 73(1965): 303–21. In English see J. A. Leighton, "Fichte's Conception of God," *Philosophical Review* 4 (1895): 143–53; and an article with the same title, by Ellen Talbot Bliss, *The Monist* 23(1913): 42–58.

progressive German thinkers when he wrote to Fichte: "Your cause seems to be of *universal* importance. I believe it is the cause of philosophy itself, the cause of the age and of the nation."[92] Fichte's opponents were no less convinced of the universal importance of their struggle against anarchy and atheism. The atheism controversy quickly became a paper war in which the two sides exchanged withering polemical broadsides and volleys of sharply worded pamphlets. So many pamphlets were contributed to this battle that it is a wonder how German printers found time to publish anything else during this period.[93]

To no one's surprise, Fichte was hardly content to let others come to his public defense. He quickly prepared and published two elaborate replies to the charges against him.[94] Not only did he insist upon the difference between his own opinions and those of Forberg and reject vehemently the accusation of atheism, but he also rejected absolutely the right of any authority to interfere with the transmission of philosophical ideas. In the second work (the *Judicial Defense*) he went far beyond the particular matter at hand and recounted the entire history of his persecution during his years at Jena, in order to expose the real—that is, political—motivation of his opponents in the atheism controversy.

All of these events combined to place the government at Weimar in a most uncomfortable position. It was, after all, largely because of the tolerant and liberal atmosphere surrounding the court of Duke Karl-August that Weimar enjoyed its reputation as one of the centers of German culture and that Jena had risen to such prominence among the German universities. The Weimar administration had no desire to damage this reputation or to interfere with the academic freedom enjoyed by university professors. In the case of Fichte in particular, the

[92]Friedrich Schelegel to Fichte, May 3 (?), 1799 (in *LB*, I: 422–23, and *AA* III, 3: 377).

[93]"Anyone who wishes to become familiar with the extent of excitement evoked in Germany at that time by the Fichtean atheism controversy (the importance of which for the development of German religiosity cannot be overestimated) has to have gone through the pamphlet literature of the year 1799. The most disgusting publication of that year was surely an anonymous book entitled 'The Apparitions of the Angel Gabriel, or, The Angel Gabriel and Johann Gottlieb Fichte. In the Seventh Year of the Fichtean Revelation'—a book which reveals the vile manner in which this persecuted man was besieged in those days" (Nohl, "Miscellen zu Fichtes Entwicklungesgeschichte und Biographie," p. 378). For discussion of the incredible flood of polemical literature unleashed by the atheism controversy see Karl Hase, *Jenaisches Fichte-Büchlein* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1856); and Léon, *Fichte et son temps*, I: 527–88.

[94]*A Public Appeal by J. G. Fichte, Ph.D. and Professor at Jena, against the Charge of Making Atheistic Assertions, a Charge Made in a Confiscation Rescript by the Elector of Saxony (J. G. Fichtes d. Phil. Doctors und ordentlichen Professors zu Jena Appelation an das Publikum über die durch ein Kurf, Sächs. Confiscationsrescript ihm beigemessenen atheistischen Aeusserungen)*, published in January 1799 (*SW*, V: 191–238; *AA* I, 5: 409–53). *Judicial Defense of the Editor of the Philosophical Journal against the Charge of Atheism (Der Herausbeger des philosophischen Journals gerichtliche Verantwortungsschriften gegen die Anklage des Atheismus)*, published in March 1799 (*SW*, V: 239–333; *AA* I, 6: 25–89).

Weimar authorities had more than once in the past demonstrated their forbearance and support. Accordingly, they sought some accommodation that would satisfy the zealots in Dresden without really penalizing the authors and editors in question. With the support of Fichte's friends at court, the Weimar authorities considered issuing an official reprimand, but one that would clearly indicate that the only fault of the authors and editors was their failure to appreciate how easily their works might be misunderstood by philosophically unsophisticated readers.

Already irritated by Fichte's impatient decision to lay his case before the public, even Fichte's strongest supporters in Weimar were alienated by his next tactic, revealed in a letter he wrote to Privy Councillor Voigt on March 22, 1799. In this letter Fichte declared his unwillingness to accept even the slighest censure; moreover, in a lofty tone that offended almost everyone, he proclaimed that his honor would not permit him to remain subordinate to any government that could find him blameworthy in this affair. Were he in fact to be censured, he wrote, he would have no choice but to submit his resignation from the faculty of the university; moreover, he added that other illustrious members of the faculty had already agreed to resign with him and to join him in founding a new university.

This time Fichte's tactlessness and self-righteous rigidity proved fatal. The effort to force the administration's hand and the blatant attempt at intimidation were badly miscalculated. Fichte's letter not only strengthened the position of his enemies within the government, but deprived him of his friends as well, including Voigt and Goethe. On March 29, 1799, Duke Karl-August issued the previously negotiated mild rebuke to the editors of the *Philosophisches Journal,* to which was added a postscript announcing the acceptance of Fichte's offer of resignation, effective immediately.

Despite frantic attempts to undo the harm done by his first letter and to withdraw the threat of resignation, Fichte found himself unable to escape from the trap he himself had set. The duke remained firm in his decision to treat Fichte's threat as a serious offer of resignation and to accept it. Naturally, this surprising development only increased the level of public excitement. The students circulated petitions and held demonstrations; leading thinkers from all over Germany expressed their shock and tried to intervene on Fichte's behalf; new pamphlets and articles poured forth. But the damage had been done. "The soul of Jena"[95] departed for Berlin in June 1799.

The bitterness caused by his dismissal from Jena was only compounded by the frustrations and disappointments of the next few

[95]"Fichte is now the soul of Jena," wrote Hölderlin in a letter to Neuffer of November 1794 (quoted in *FvB*, p. 271).

months, during which Fichte began to lose the support of those whose opinions mattered most to him. The first to break with Fichte was his old patron from Zurich, Johann Kaspar Lavater, who not only was alienated by Fichte's behavior during the atheism controversy, but also seemed to concur with the charge of atheism against his former friend. Then Jacobi, whom Fichte genuinely admired and whose support he ardently sought, published a long "open letter" attacking the subjectivism of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre.* The most promising of Fichte's younger followers, Schelling, began to make less of a secret of the growing differences between his own views and those of his erstwhile master and quickly fell into what Fichte viewed as dogmatic apostasy. Even his most famous convert, Reinhold, began to have second thoughts about Fichte's philosophy and soon announced his repudiation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and new allegiance to the "logical realism" of Christoph Gottfried Bardili. Most painful of all for Fichte must have been the short declaration published by Kant in August 1799, publicly disassociating himself from Fichte's writings and repudiating the *Wissenschaftslehre* as incompatible with the Critical Philosophy.[96]

[96]The break with Lavater was prompted by Fichte's *Appeal to the Public.* In a letter to Fichte of February 7–12, 1799, Lavater expressed his grave reservations, both about the *Appeal* and the views on religion Fichte held. The break became final in the exchange of letters that followed.

Jacobi's open letter (the famous "green letter" which greatly influenced some of the early Romantics) was published in March 1799. It was in this open letter that the charge of "subjectivism" (which later became the basis of Hegel's influential critique of Fichte) was first raised against the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Fichte took Jacobi's criticism very seriously indeed and attempted to reply to it in subsequent versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* as well as in more popular writings (such as *The Vocation of Man*).

The differences between Schelling and Fichte were already evident in the former's *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kriticismus* (English translation, *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism,* by Fritz Marti, in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge,* pp. 156–96) in 1795. Indeed, Fichte included a critical discussion of Schelling's views on this topic—without mentioning Schelling by name—in the "First Introduction" to the *Wissenschaftslehre* in 1797. The divergence between the two men only grew with Schelling's excursions into the philosophy of nature, finally becoming obvious and permanent in 1801, in Schelling's *Darstellung meines System der Philosophie (Presentation of My System of Philosophy*), in which Schelling explicitly contrasts his own "system of identity" or "objective idealism" with Fichte's philosophy.

Reinhold's misgivings about the philosophy to which he had so recently converted were greatly influenced by Jacobi's published criticisms of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* as well as by his growing infatuation with C. B. Bardili's "logical realism." These doubts are already apparent in Reinhold's "Sendungschreiben an J. C. Lavater und J. G. Fichte" (1799). Finally, in 1801, in the first issue of *Beyträge zur leichtern Uebersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie beym Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts,* Reinhold publically announced his new allegiance to Bardili's philosophical standpoint.

Kant's repudiation of Fichte was published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* August 29, 1799. For an English translation of Kant's "Declaration," see Kant's *Philosophical Correspondence,* 1759–99, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 253–4. Fichte's reply to Kant's "Declaration" was published a month later in the same periodical.

Thus, as spectacularly as it began, Fichte's career at Jena ended. His star seemed to set as rapidly as it had risen,[97] though in fact some of his most important work still lay ahead of him. In the years that followed (he died in 1814) he not only composed some of his most profound theoretical writings,[98] but he also, through his part in establishing the new university in Berlin and, above all, in the stirring patriotic speeches he delivered during the French occupation of Prussia,[99] finally had the opportunity for which he had longed throughout his life—to play some direct role in the great events of his time.

Neither the bitterness of the atheism controversy nor the importance of his later work, however, should be allowed to obscure the genuine brilliance of Fichte's career at Jena. Profound as his influence as a teacher may have been, it was relatively short lasting; serious as the disputes in which he was involved may have seemed, they were (with the exception of the atheism controversy) quickly forgotten. The events and circumstances of Fichte's Jena period are important to us now only insofar as some acquaintance with them facilitates our access to and comprehension of his writings, for these alone constitute the enduring achievement of Fichte's Jena years.

What then did Fichte accomplish in his five years at Jena? His most significant as well as most influential accomplishment was certainly the first presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* a presentation begun in *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and worked out in detail in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* as supplemented by the *Outline*

[97]Goethe, when informed of Fichte's departure, is said to have shrugged: "One star sets, another star rises." This oral remark is quoted in Hase, *Jenaisches Fichte-Büchlein,* p. 49, and *LB,* I, p. 288. Note also the following revealing passage from Goethe's letter of August 30, 1799, to J. G. Schlosser (quoted in *FvB,* p. 130): "I will always be sorry that we had to lose Fichte and that his foolish presumption expelled him from a life which (as extravagent as this hyperbole may sound) he will never find again anywhere else on the entire planet. The older one becomes, the more highly one values natural talent, for it cannot be acquired. Fichte certainly has a most outstanding mind, but I fear that it is now lost, both to him and the world. His present circumstances can only add more bitterness to his distorted features. Incidentally, though it may seem a small matter, it is fortunate that his shameless provocation placed the court in a situation where it could take a step which could be approved by one side but not criticized by the other. As for myself, I readily admit that I would have voted against my own son if he had permitted himself to use similar language against any government."

[98]In addition to the various versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (especially those of 1801, 1804, 1810, and 1813), Fichte also composed during his later years new versions of his philosophy of law and system of ethics, major new treatises on political philosophy, and an important series of new "introductions" to his philosophy, including especially the lectures "The Facts of Consciousness."

[99]*Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808). These *Addresses to the German Nation* played an important role in the subsequent history of German nationalism, though, according to the most recent scholarship, their immediate effect was a good deal less dramatic than subsequent nationalist mythology has suggested. English translation by R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull, ed. and intro. George Armstrong Kelly (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre. Though it is wrong simply to identify Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* with the initial presentation contained in these first books, they laid the foundations for all subsequent presentations and revisions of Fichte's system, including the "New Presentation" of 1797–98 and the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo,* both of which must also be included among the lasting achievements of Fichte's Jena period. So too must the treatises on philosophy of right and the system of ethics be considered works of lasting significance, not only as essential extensions of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but for the truly original contributions they make to the discussion of ancient questions of human nature and conduct. Most of his remaining Jena writings—published and unpublished, including his letters—deserve our attention less for their own sake than because of the substantial contribution they can make to our understanding of the major works mentioned above.

Between 1794 and 1799, Fichte produced a corpus of philosophical writings that, in terms of intrinsic interest as well as historical influence, have rarely been surpassed by the efforts of any other philosopher during a similarly brief period of time. Acquaintance with the turbulent events of Fichte's career as teacher, reformer, and polemicist not only helps us understand the peculiarities and shortcomings of these writings; it also cannot but increase our appreciation of how much he was able to accomplish under such extraordinary circumstances.

Appendix: Fichte's Lectures and Writings, 1792–1799

The following list includes all of the articles and books Fichte published prior to his departure from Jena in the summer of 1799. It does not include the many short editorial notes and announcements he published in various journals, nor does it include works published without his knowledge and authorization.[100]

The academic year at Jena was divided into two semesters. The summer semester began in late spring and concluded at the end of the summer. The winter semester began in midautumn and concluded in early spring. The following list includes those lecture courses Fichte actually taught during his five years at Jena. It does not include courses that were announced but never offered, nor does it include the informal

[100]For a truly complete list of all of Fichte's publications, see the "Verzeichnis der Werke und Veröffentlichungen Fichtes" in *AA* I, 1: 463–76, and the supplement to the same, published in *Kant-Studien* 59(1968): 58–61. All of Fichte's unpublished writings and notes from this period are collected in *AA* II. Student transcripts of some of his lectures may be found in *AA* IV.

weekly philosophical *conservatoria* that Fichte instituted following his return from Osmannstädt in the fall of 1795 and continued to conduct every semester thereafter.[101]

LECTURES	PUBLICATIONS
	Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation, 1st ed. (Spring 1792).
	A Discourse on the Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Hitherto Suppressed It (Spring 1793).
	A Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution, Part I, first installment (Spring 1793).
	Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation, 2d ed. (Spring 1793).
	"A Demonstration of the Illegality of Reprinting Books" (May 1793).
	Review of Creuzer's *Skeptical Reflections on Free Will* (October 1793).
	Review of Gebhard's *On Ethical Goodness Based upon Disinterested Benevolence* (October 1793).
	Review of *Aenesidemus* (February 1794).
	A Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution, Part I, second installment (February 1794).
	Concerning Human Dignity (Spring 1794).
	Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre (May 1794).
Summer Semester 1794[102]	
Theoretical Philosophy	*Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* (September 1794).
Morality for Scholars	*Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* first installment (Pts. I and II) (September 1794).

[101]Information concerning Fichte's courses is based primarily upon university lecture catalogs and announcements published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* See "Zusammenstellung der in der Jenaer Vorlesungsverzeichnissen angekündigten Vorlesungen," in Hans Jacob's edition of Fichte's *Nachgelassene Schriften,* vol. II (Berlin: Junker and Dünnhaupt, 1937), pp. xli–xliii, and the Appendix to Emanuel Hirsch, "Fichtes Religionsphilosophie in der Frühzeit der Wissenschaftslehre," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophisches Kritik* 163(1917): 34–36.

[102]Fichte had originally scheduled two courses of "private" lectures for his first semester at Jena. In addition to his lectures on Theoretical Philosophy, he had also announced lectures on Practical Philosophy, which he canceled prior to the beginning of the summer semester.

LECTURES	PUBLICATIONS
Winter Semester 1794–95 Theoretical Philosophy Practical Philosophy Logic and Metaphysics[103] Morality for Scholars[104]	"On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" (January 1795). "Concerning the Capacity for Language and the Origin of Language" (Spring 1795).
Summer Semester 1795[105]	*Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* second installment (Pt. III and preface) (July/August 1795). *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty* (July/August 1795).
Winter Semester 1795–96 Natural Right Logic and Metaphysics	Review of Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (January 1796). *Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre,* Part I (March 1796). "A Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*" (Spring 1796).
Summer Semester 1796[106] Ethics Natural Right Logic and Metaphysics	

[103]Logic and Metaphysics (later titled Philosophical Propaedeutic) was an introductory course which, in response to student requests, Fichte first offered in his second semester at Jena and repeated every semester that he taught at Jena thereafter. As a text for this course Fichte used volume I of Ernst Platner's *Philosophical Aphorisms.* For further information, see n. 69.

[104]Because of the controversy over his efforts to persuade the student "orders" to disband, Fichte was forced to discontinue his public lectures prior to the end of the winter semester.

[105]Though he had previously announced that he would be lecturing on Natural Right, Philosophy of Religion, and Logic and Metaphysics during the summer semester of 1795, Fichte did not teach at all during this semester. Instead, he spent the summer in the nearby village of Osmannstädt, to which he had fled for peace and refuge after the turmoil of the winter and spring.

[106]In addition to these three courses of lectures, the lecture catalog for the summer semester of 1796 also announced that Fichte would deliver a series of public lectures "during the holidays" on Kant's *Perpetual Peace.* Furthermore, the catalog indicated that Fichte would be teaching a seminar or tutorial ("privatissime") on the *Wissenschaftslehre.* But according to the report of one of Fichte's most able students, J. F. Herbart, this seminar was canceled. See *J. G. Fichte in Gesprach: Berichte der Zeitgenossen,* ed. Erich Fuchs, vol. I (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1978), p. 360.

LECTURES	PUBLICATIONS
Winter Semester 1796–97[107]	
Fundamentals of Transcendental Philosophy *nova methodo*	"Introduction" to *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (February 1797).
Ethics	"Annals of Philosophical Tone" (February 1797).
Logic and Metaphysics	
Summer Semester 1797	
Natural Right	*Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre,* Part II (September 1797).
Logic and Metaphysics	
Winter Semester 1797–98	
Fundamentals of Transcendental Philosophy	"Second Introduction" to *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (August and November 1797).
Ethics	Review of *Journal for Truth,* vol. 2 (Fall 1797).
Logic and Metaphysics	*Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre,* chapter 1 (March 1798).
	The System of Ethical Theory according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre (Spring 1798).
Summer Semester 1798[108]	
Logic and Metaphysics	"On the Foundation of Our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe" (Fall 1798).
Winter Semester 1798–99	
Fundamentals of Transcendental Philosophy *nova methodo*	*J. G. Fichte's Appeal to the Public concerning the Charge of Making Atheistic Assertions* (January 1799).
Natural Rights and Ethics	*Judicial Defense of the Editor of the Philosophical Journal against the Charge of Atheism* (March 1799).
Logic and Metaphysics	
Summer Semester 1799[109]	

[107]The lecture catalog also announced that Fichte planned to deliver a series of public lectures on transcendental philosophy "during the holidays."

[108]Fichte spent most of the summer of 1798 at a spa outside of Jena and only taught during the months of June and September.

[109]For the summer of 1799, Fichte was scheduled to lecture on the Philosophy of Religion, as well as Logic and Metaphysics. However, by the time the semester began he was in Berlin, where he had fled in the wake of the atheism controversy.

TEXTS

I

Review of *Aenesidemus*

Editor's Preface

One of the more curious philosophical publications of 1792 was an anonymously published treatise with the awkward title *Aenesidemus, or concerning the Foundations of the Elementary Philosophy Propounded in Jena by Professor Reinhold, including a Defense of Skepticism against the Pretensions of the Critique of Reason.*[1] The book consists of letters exchanged between an enthusiastic champion of the new Critical Philosophy ("Hermias") and a self-styled "Humean" critic of the same ("Aenesidemus"). The anonymous author's sympathies are plainly on the side of the skeptic. Though *Aenesidemus* was not the first attack upon Kantianism, it is distinguished from other early reactions to Kant by the detailed scrutiny to which it subjects not only Kant's own texts, but also the writings of K. L. Reinhold, whose Elementary Philosophy was alleged to represent a more "advanced" and systematic version of Kant's own Critical Philosophy.

By the time *Aenesidemus* appeared, Fichte was widely regarded as one of the more able and original members of the younger generation of Kantians. He was, moreover, an open admirer of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, and as such he felt himself called upon to respond to the challenge represented by *Aenesidemus.* On the strength of his reputation as the author of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation,* Fichte had received an invitation to contribute occasional book reviews to the dis-

[1] *Aenesidemus oder über die Fundamente der von dem Herrn Professor Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie: Nebst einer Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmassungen der Vernunftkritik,* originally published in 1792 with no indication of publisher, place of publication, or author's name. Reprinted in 1911 as the first volume in the series Neudrucke seltener philosophischer Werke issued by the Kantgesellschaft (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1911). In English, see the excerpt from *Aenesidemus,* translated by George di Giovanni, in George di Giovanni and H. S. Harris, eds., *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 104–35.

tinguished *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. It is hardly surprising that the first book he asked to review was *Aenesidemus*.

Despite being published anonymously, *Aenesidemus* was widely recognized as the work of G. E. Schulze (1761–1833), professor of philosophy at Helmstedt. Nor was Schulze unknown to Fichte. The two men had been students together, first at Pforta and then later at Wittenburg. Moreover, Fichte believed Schulze to have been the author of a venemously sarcastic review of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*. Thus Fichte's philosophical differences with the author of *Aenesidemus* were complicated by personal animosity, which helps explain some of the sharpness of the tone of Fichte's review. But the importance of this text far transcends any personal squabbles that may have provoked it.

It is not an overstatement to say that the encounter with *Aenesidemus* occasioned a revolution in Fichte's thought—the second in less than a decade. Fichte's first intellectual revolution was his conversion to Kantianism; the second involved a fundamental and thoroughgoing revision of his adopted Kantian perspective, a revision prompted by Schulze's published objections to Kant and Reinhold. Though Fichte had previously confessed to some private doubts about the Kantian system, not until he undertook the task of reviewing *Aenesidemus* was he forced to confront squarely these earlier misgivings and to amend his own position accordingly.

What were Schulze's objections to Kant and Reinhold? Schulze/Aenesidemus opposes transcendental idealism in the name of what he calls "Humean skepticism," defined as the view "that in philosophy nothing can be decided on the basis of incontestably certain and universally valid first principles concerning the existence or nonexistence of things in themselves and their properties nor concerning the limits of man's capacity for knowledge."[2] Without denying the certainty of "immediate consciousness" and "the laws of logic," Aenesidemus denies that we can attain to "objective knowledge." Since the Critical Philosophy claims to provide and to account for such objective knowledge, it is nothing but the latest form of philosophical dogmatism. According to Schulze, the basic strategy of the Critical Philosophy is to begin with the fact of representation (i.e., the fact that we are conscious of anything at all) and from this to deduce the reality of "things in themselves" and the "subject in itself," both of which are purported to be conditions necessary for the possibility of experience. Aenesidemus finds this move to involve an illicit step from thought to being. Just because we must think of things in a certain manner, he argues, it does not follow that they must actually be as we must imagine them.

Schulze's general indictment of the Critical Philosophy is augmented

[2]*Aenesidemus* (1911 ed.), p. 18.

by a detailed critique of Reinhold's systematic reformulation of the same, and much of *Aenesidemus* is devoted to an elaborate analysis of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, including an attack on the ambiguity of Reinhold's technical vocabulary.[3] One of the more important specific criticisms Schulze levels at Reinhold concerns the proposed "first principle" of the latter's system. This "principle of consciousness" (which states that every act of consciousness involves a representation which the representing subject distinguishes from itself and from the object of representation) is criticized on several grounds: it is alleged to involve fatal ambiguities; its systematic adequacy for the derivation of the other propositions in the Elementary Philosophy is denied; and its status as the "ultimate" or "highest" first principle of philosophy is questioned. But Aenesidemus's major objection is not tied to the details of Reinhold's system. Instead, he develops the general charge that the Critical Philosophy is not entitled to make any claims concerning the existence of things in themselves or the transcendental subject, and that, deprived of these claims, transcendental idealism represents no advance on Berkeleian phenomenalism.

Schulze concludes his critique with an examination of the "practical" portion of Kant's Critical Philosophy. After rejecting Kant's theory of the postulates of practical reason as well as the moral theology Kant erects thereupon, the skeptic goes on to challenge the very heart of Kant's moral theory, namely, the principle of the priority of practical reason. Aenesidemus's argument against this celebrated principle is that we must first know what we *can* do before there can arise any questions about what we *ought* to do. Thus, here too, theoretical reason has priority.

Though Fichte undertook the task of reviewing *Aenesidemus* early in 1793, it took him almost a year to finish his review. The reason for the long and unforeseen delay becomes apparent in Fichte's correspondence of this period. In a letter of May 25, 1793, to C. G. Schütz, editor of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, he promised to send his review "within a short time." More than six months later he again wrote to Schütz, apologizing for the delay and offering the rather cryptic explanation, "I have been thrown into an unforeseen labor by Aenesidemus's skepticism."[4] A letter written earlier in the fall to a personal friend includes the somewhat more candid admission: "I immediately began a book by a resolute skeptic, which led me to the clear conviction that philosophy is still very far from being a science. Thus I was forced to abandon my own previous system and to think of a tenable one."[5] In short, Fichte found

[3]On Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, see Breazeale, "Between Kant and Fichte," pp. 785–821.

[4]Letter to C. G. Schütz, December 14, 1793.

[5]From a draft of a letter to L. W. Wloemer, November 1793.

that in order to refute Aenesidemus he would have to do much more than merely reaffirm his allegiance to Kant and Reinhold. For the truth was that Fichte found himself in reluctant agreement with some of the skeptic's most penetrating objections to the Critical Philosophy. On the other hand, he continued to believe that these same objections, however damaging they might prove against "the letter" of the previously published versions of the Critical Philosophy, were nevertheless ineffectual against "the spirit" of the same. But to demonstrate this conviction he would have to distinguish the letter from the spirit of transcendental idealism; in doing so he felt bound to offer a new version of Kantianism, one that would be true to what he took to be the underlying "spirit" of Kant's and Reinhold's writings, but that would at the same time be immune to Schulze's well-placed objections. Thus the reason for the long delay was simply that Fichte felt he had to construct at least the outlines of a new philosophical system before he would be in a position to reply to the skeptic.

Throughout the winter of 1793–94, unencumbered by professional obligations, Fichte labored at his self-assigned task. Living with his new wife in Zurich under the roof of his obliging father-in-law, he undertook a complete revision of his own philosophical standpoint. What began as a written analysis of Reinhold's system for his own private use turned into a lengthy manuscript representing the earliest version of Fichte's own philosophy, which thus deserves to be called "the first *Wissenschaftslehre.*"[6] By the middle of December, Fichte was announcing his success to his friends:

> [*Aenesidemus*] has overthrown Reinhold in my eyes, has made me suspicious of Kant, and has overturned my whole system from the ground up. One cannot live under the open sky. It cannot be helped; the system must be rebuilt. And this is what I have been faithfully doing for the past six weeks or so. Come celebrate the harvest with me! I have discovered a new foundation, out of which it will be easy to develop the whole of philosophy. Kant's philosophy, as such, is correct—but only in its results and not in its reasons.[7]

If Fichte's optimism concerning the "ease" with which the whole of philosophy could be developed from his new foundation turned out to be premature, his achievement was significant nevertheless. Though the

[6]"Eigne Meditationen über ElementarPhilosophie/Practische Philosophie." First published in 1971 in *AA* II, 3: 19–266. Concerning the evolution of Fichte's thought during this crucial period in his development, see Kabitz, *Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte,* and Reinhard Lauth, "Genèse du 'Fondement de toute la doctrine de la science,'" pp. 51–79.

[7]Letter to H. Stephani, mid-December 1793 (translated in full below, Section X, no. 7). Also see the letters to J. F. Flatt, November–December 1793; to F. I. Neithammer, December 6, 1793; and to H. V. Reinhard, January 15, 1794 (translated below, Section X, nos. 5, 6, and 8).

task of publicly presenting the new foundation and erecting a complete system upon it began in earnest in the summer of 1794, when Fichte took up his new position at Jena, the first public announcement of the new system came several months earlier in the *Aenesidemus* review. Fichte's review appeared in print in two parts in the February 11 and 12, 1794, issues of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* and immediately attracted the attention of the philosophical public. Though much of the contemporary interest was aroused by the sarcastic, polemical tone of Fichte's essay, its lasting importance lies in the brilliant hints it provides concerning his new standpoint and philosophical discovery.

Thus Fichte begins by conceding to Aenesidemus that the transcendental standpoint is incompatible with any doctrine of things in themselves. Indeed, he is willing to go a step further and to insist that the very thought of "things in themselves" is self-contradictory, and adds that it is up to future versions of the Critical Philosophy to make this point more clearly than have previous versions. And how shall this point be made clear? By showing that we can account for the experienced necessity of representations without having recourse to a "nonthought" like that of the thing in itself.

To take another example: Fichte admits the force of some of Schulze's arguments against Reinhold's proposed "first principle," "the principle of consciousness." But he does not abandon Reinhold's systematic vision, nor does he conclude with the skeptic that the quest for a "first principle" of philosophy must be abandoned. Instead, Fichte hints that the principle of consciousness must itself be derived from a *still higher* (though unspecified) principle, one that can serve as the first principle of both practical and theoretical philosophy. Unlike the "principle of consciousness," such a first principle will correspond to or express not some *fact* of consciousness, but rather the originary, self-productive *Act* of self-positing which underlies and conditions the positing of the subject and object of consciousness. Thus philosophy must begin with a principle that expresses the self-positing Act of the absolute I. The thought of such an absolute I is indeed a "transcendental idea," but it "is distinguished from all other transcendental ideas by the fact that it is realized through intellectual intuition, through the *'I am.'*"[8] Thus the *Aenesidemus* review contains the first public announcement of Fichte's "discovery": that philosophy can become scientific only if it is presented as a system founded upon a single first principle, a first principle that is itself founded upon nothing but the indubitably certain self-positing Act of the I.

Fichte concludes his examination of Aenesidemus's critique of Kant's practical philosophy with a vigorous reassertion of the "priority of prac-

[8]*SW*, I: 16.

tical reason." In an eloquent passage dealing with the complex relationship between the "absolute," the "theoretical," and the "practical" I, he outlines and succinctly adumbrates the organizational strategy underlying the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre:* "Far from practical reason having to recognize the priority of theoretical reason, the entire existence of practical reason is founded on the *conflict* between the self-determining element within us and the theoretical-knowing element. And practical reason itself would be canceled if this conflict were eliminated."[9] To be sure, in this review Fichte confines himself to "hints" and suggestions, none of which can appropriately be developed very far on this first occasion. But the hints are so broad and the suggestions so original and provocative as to signal the beginning of a new chapter in the history of transcendental idealism.[10]

The text of "Recension des *Aenesidemus*" upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW*, I: 3–25 (*AA* I, 2: 41–67).

[9]*SW*, I: 22–24.

[10]For further discussion of the background and significance of Fichte's *Aenesidemus* review, see Daniel Breazeale, "Fichte's *Aenesidemus* Review and the Transformation of German Idealism," *Review of Metaphysics* 34(1981): 545–68.

I,3

Review of *Aenesidemus*

If it is undeniable that philosophizing reason owes all the human progress which it has made so far to the observations of skepticism concerning the insecurity of every resting place yet obtained by reason, and if, in the case of the recent, remarkable advance of philosophizing reason through its critical employment, its illustrious discoverer[1] has himself explicitly acknowledged this debt to skepticism; and if nevertheless the ongoing spectacle presented by the friends of this new philosophy, who become ever more divided among themselves the further they advance in their research, makes it apparent even to an uninformed observer that even now reason has not yet obtained its great aim of transforming philosophy into a science, however near it may be to this goal: then nothing is more to be desired than that skepticism might crown its labors and drive inquiring reason on to the attainment of its lofty goal. And moreover, since it has long been thought that skepticism's remaining legitimate claims against philosophy have only lacked clear articulation, then nothing is more to be desired than that skepticism might at last find a spokesman who will not relinquish these claims but will have the talent to present them clearly. Whether the author of the book before us is the desired spokesman for skepticism is something which will emerge from an examination of the same.

I,4 Skepticism, as represented by the author of *Aenesidemus*, had, of course, to direct its weapons particularly against Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, that is, against the latest formulation of this philosophy in

[1]This is, of course, a reference to Immanuel Kant. For Kant's acknowledgment of skepticism's positive contribution to philosophy, see his discussion of Hume in the introduction to the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, as well as the remarks on the advantages of the "skeptical method" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, A424/B451, A485/B513–A486/B514, A507/B535, and especially A755/B783–A769/B797.

Reinhold's *Contributions,*[2] because in the opinion of a majority of the admirers of the Kantian philosophy, Reinhold is the author who has either already succeeded in establishing philosophy as a science or else has best prepared the way for such success. But if the skeptical attack really aims at a decisive battle, then, for the benefit of those who would deny both claims concerning Reinhold, the weapons have to be turned against the most credible document of recent philosophy, the *Critique of Pure Reason.* The book here reviewed consists of letters exchanged between Hermias, an enthusiastic admirer of the Kantian philosophy, and Aenesidemus. Hermias proclaims his complete conviction regarding the truth and universal validity of this philosophy, a conviction based especially upon Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy. Aenesidemus is of a different opinion and sends Hermias an examination of this philosophy.

In order to comply with Reinhold's well-founded demand, Aenesidemus bases his critique of the Elementary Philosophy on the presupposition that the following propositions are established and valid: (1) (Fact) There are representations within us, and these representations have some features in common, as well as others which serve to distinguish them from each other. (2) (Rule of judgment) Universal logic is the touchstone of everything that is true, and only insofar as any argument concerning facts complies with the laws of logic can it lay claim to correctness. Each section of Aenesidemus's examination begins with a quotation of those paragraphs of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy which are to be examined, as they have been most recently presented by Reinhold in his *Contributions,* I: 165–254.[3]

Examination of Reinhold's first principles regarding the nature and essential features of an Elementary Philosophy. Aenesidemus begins by admitting that philosophy until now has lacked a highest and universally valid first principle, and that it will be able to raise itself to the level of a science only after it has established such a first principle. Furthermore, it also seems to him undeniable that this first principle can only be that princi-
I,5 ple which establishes and determines the highest concepts of all, namely, the concept of representation and the concept of that which can be represented. Though the skeptic and the Elementary philosopher are agreed upon this point, it remains questionable to this reviewer whether philosophy itself profits from this unanimity. Suppose, for instance, that those objections which can justifiably be raised against the Principle of Consciousness[4] as the first principle of all philosophy should lead us in

[2]Karl Leonhard Reinhold, *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen,* vol. I (Jena: Mauke, 1790).

[3]The reference is to Section III of Reinhold's *Beyträge,* vol. I, titled "A New Presentation of the Main Elements of the Elementary Philosophy."

[4]The Principle of Consciousness (*Satz des Bewusstseins*) was the proposed "first principle" of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy and is stated as follows: "In consciousness the subject

the future to suspect that there must be a concept for philosophy as a whole (and not merely for theoretical philosophy) which is even *higher* than the concept of representation. Against Reinhold's assertion in his first paragraph (viz., the assertion that in consciousness the subject distinguishes the representation from both subject and object and relates it to both), Aenesidemus remarks: (1) "This is not an absolutely *first* principle, since qua proposition and judgment it is subordinate to the highest rule of all judgment, the principle of contradiction."[5] This objection has been raised before, and to it Reinhold has replied (*Foundation*,[6] p. 85) that "the principle of consciousness admittedly is *subordinate* to the principle of contradiction, not in the manner in which a proposition is subordinate to a first principle which *determines* it, but rather as subordinate to a *law* which it may not *contradict*." If the reviewer understands this reply (which does not satisfy Aenesidemus) correctly, Reinhold thus denies that the principle of contradiction has any *material* validity,[7] as Kant has also done, though only for merely theoretical philosophy, and grants it only a *formal* and logical validity. Reinhold's reply is correct to this extent, and amounts to that reply which he has often given to uncalled-for judgments on his Elementary Philosophy: one cannot think *about* the laws of thinking in any other way except *according* to those laws. Like any possible reflection, reflection on the Principle of Consciousness is, with

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distinguishes the representation from both the subject and the object and relates it to them both" (*Beyträge*, I: 267).

[5]Like all of Fichte's citations from Schulze and Reinhold in this essay, this quotation is not exact. For details on the (minor) differences between the original texts and Fichte's quotations, as well as for page references to the writings of Schulze and Reinhold (which Fichte usually neglects to supply), see the text published in *AA* I, 2: 41–67.

[6]*Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791). See the excerpt from this text translated by George di Giovanni, in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 53–96.

[7]"*Reale* Gultigkeit." The distinction between "formal" and "material" (or, as Fichte sometimes prefers, between "logical" and "real") validity occurs frequently in Fichte's early writings. As the above passage suggests, a proposition is materially valid if it is true in the sense of corresponding to a "fact," whereas all that is required of a formally valid proposition is that it not contradict itself or any other proposition one accepts. Kant had already proposed a distinction between the formal and material conditions of knowledge (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A150/B189–A151/B191, A220/B268, and A244/B302), but Fichte's usage also reflects the influence of Reinhold's distinction between "formal" and "material" elements. In *Ueber das Fundament*, pp. 109–10, Reinhold explains this distinction as follows: "I distinguish the *material* from the *formal* element in the foundation of the Elementary Philosophy. The first is the *fact of consciousness;* the second is the *Principle of Consciousness*, along with those *definitions* which are immediately derived from and thoroughly determined by this principle. The *content* of the Elementary Philosophy . . . is obtained from this first element; the second, formal side determines the *scientific form* of the Elementary Philosophy. Thus, just as matter and form, for all of their differences, are nevertheless altogether inseparable, so are they inseparably joined in the foundations of the Elementary Philosophy."

respect to its form, subordinate to the principle of contradiction; but its *content* is not determined by the principle of contradiction. Thus for Aenesidemus's remark to have any real meaning he must, though he nowhere clearly says so, ascribe material as well as *formal* validity to the principle of contradiction, that is, he has to assume or conjecture a
I,6 mental fact upon which the principle of contradiction is originally based. It will become clear at once what this fact should be called, since Aenesidemus remarks: (2) "The Principle of Consciousness is not a principle *determined completely by itself.* Since the concepts of subject and object, according to Reinhold's own explanation, are first determined by being distinguished within representation and by their relation to representation, then this *distinguishing* and *relating* itself must at least be completely and unambiguously determined in such a way that only one interpretation is permitted. And this is not the case," as Aenesidemus, in a manner which satisfies this reviewer at least, has demonstrated by enumerating several possible meanings for these concepts and citing the various and even ambiguous expressions which Reinhold has subsequently employed in the attempt to clarify them. But what if it is precisely the indeterminacy and indeterminability of these concepts which point to a higher principle (which remains to be discovered) and to the material validity of the principle of identity and opposition? And what if the concepts of distinguishing and relating can only be determined by means of the concept of identity and its opposite? Finally Aenesidemus adds: (3) "The Principle of Consciousness is not a universally valid principle nor does it express a fact which is bound up with no particular experience and no specific argument." Aenesidemus adduces several empirical manifestations of consciousness which, in his view, lack the three elements which are supposedly required for all consciousness [viz., a representation, a representor, and that which is represented]. Later on I will have a few words to say concerning the extent to which this sort of objection based upon experience is at all acceptable and the extent to which it is appropriate to reject it. A close examination of what this principle cannot be raises the question: What kind of principle is it in fact? Aenesidemus answers: "It is (1) a synthetic proposition, one in which to a subject there is added a predicate (viz., consciousness) which is not already included in the concept of the subject, but rather, is first annexed to it in experience." It is well known that Reinhold claims that this principle is merely analytic. We will here overlook the fact that Aenesidemus denies the universal validity of the Principle of Consciousness,
I,7 thereby assuming that there is a type of consciousness for which this principle does not hold. But there is a deeper reason for Aenesidemus's and Reinhold's differing assertions regarding this question, one which lies in the difference between two ways of regarding the Principle of Consciousness. If no consciousness is conceivable apart from these three

elements, then they are of course all included in the concept of consciousness, and of course the proposition which asserts this is, with respect to its logical validity as a proposition based upon reflection, an analytic proposition. Yet since it involves distinguishing and relating, this very action of representing, the act of consciousness itself, is obviously a synthesis, and indeed, the highest synthesis and the foundation of all other possible syntheses. This raises the very natural question: How is it possible to trace all the actions of the mind back to an act of connecting? How is synthesis conceivable without presupposing thesis and antithesis? The Principle of Consciousness is (2) "an abstract proposition which expresses what is common—according to Aenesidemus to *some,* according to Reinhold to *all*—manifestations of consciousness." It is well known that Reinhold denies that this principle is based upon any kind of abstraction. This is very illuminating if it is said against those who think that the Principle of Consciousness is obtained by abstraction from the conditions of intuition, concept, and Idea. For it is illuminating to show that, far from the concept of mere representation being based upon intuitions, concepts, and Ideas, it is only by distinguishing and relating several mere representations *as such* that the concepts of intuition, concept, and Idea become possible. One can completely determine the concept of representation as such without having to determine the latter concepts. But one cannot determine the concepts of intuition, concept, and Idea without having determined the concept of representation. If, however, Reinhold means to deny not only that the principle is based upon *this particular* abstraction, but to deny that it is based upon *any* abstraction *at all,* then the very opposite of his claim can be demonstrated—insofar, anyway, as the Principle of Consciousness is supposed to stand as the first principle at the summit of philosophy. That is to say, if everything that can be discovered in the mind is an act of representing, and if every act of representing is undeniably an *empirical* determination of the mind, then the very act of representing, along with all of its conditions, is given to consciousness only through the representation of
I,8 representing. It is thus *empirically* given, and empirical representations are the objects of all reflection concerning consciousness. The object of every empirical representation is determinately given (in space, in time, etc.), but in the representation of representing as such (which is what the Principle of Consciousness expresses), abstraction is necessarily made from these empirical determinations of the given object. Consequently, the Principle of Consciousness, which is placed at the summit of all philosophy, is based upon empirical self-observation and certainly expresses an abstraction. Admittedly, anyone who understands this principle well will feel an inner reluctance to ascribe to it a merely empirical validity. The opposite of what this principle asserts is not even conceivable. But this is just what indicates that it must be based upon something

other than a mere fact. This reviewer anyway is convinced that the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the Principle of Consciousness can be strictly derived, a priori and independently of all experience. The initial incorrect presupposition, and the one which caused the Principle of Consciousness to be proposed as the first principle of all philosophy, was precisely the presupposition that one must begin with a fact. We certainly do require a first principle which is material and not merely formal. But such a principle does not have to express a *fact;* it can also express an *Act*[8]—if I may risk asserting something which can be neither explained nor proven here. Insofar as Aenesidemus must, as was previously indicated, consider this theorem to be a proposition derived from experience, then one naturally has to admit with him that there could be experiences which might contradict this proposition. If however, this same proposition is derived from incontrovertable first principles and if it can be shown that the denial of the proposition in question involves a contradiction, then any alleged experiences which would be incompatible with the Principle of Consciousness would have to be dismissed as inconceivable.

Examination of [Reinhold's] §§ 2–5, in which the original concepts of "representation," "object," "subject," and "mere representation" are determined. In addition to repeating what has already been said, Aenesidemus points out that the explanation of representation is narrower than what it is
I,9 supposed to explain. "Since, if (following Reinhold's definition) only that is a representation which the subject distinguishes from both the subject and the object and relates to both, and if (following Aenesidemus's presupposition) only that can be distinguished which has previously been perceived, then it follows that the intuition (which is the first perception) cannot be a representation. But of course, according to Reinhold it is supposed to be a representation, etc., etc." Reinhold will justifiably deny the minor premise in this syllogism. The original object is not perceived at all, nor can it be perceived. And thus, prior to all other perception, the intuition can be related to an object originally opposed to the subject, that is, it can be related to the not-I, which is not *perceived* at all, but which is originally *posited.* Aenesidemus continues: "that distinguishing and relating which is required for representation is itself an act of representing," which, however, Reinhold has properly denied. Both distinguishing and relating can become objects of repre-

[8]"Aber ein solcher muss nicht eben eine Thatsache, er kann auch eine Thathandlung ausdrücken." *Thathandlung* (Tathandlung) is a technical term of Fichte's own coinage and is always translated here as "Act," with a capital *A*. Concerning this important term, see the Note on Translation.

sentation, and really are such within the context of the Elementary Philosophy. However, they are not representations to begin with, but only the ways in which the mind necessarily must be thought to act if it is to produce a representation. But of course it undeniably follows from this that representation is not the highest concept for every conceivable action of our minds.

In his remark to §5, Reinhold said: "The mere representation exists in consciousness *immediately,* but subject and object exist in consciousness only *by means of* the relation of the representation to them. For that in consciousness which is related to the subject and to the object must exist *prior* to the action of being related (not temporally prior of course, but essentially prior), because nothing can be related if there is nothing present to which it can be related." Aenesidemus attempts to invalidate this proof by the following similar proof: "Object and subject exist immediately. It is representations which are produced only mediately in consciousness, since nothing can be referred to something else unless that to which it is to be referred already exists, etc., etc." The subject and
I,10 object do indeed have to be thought of as preceding representation, but not in consciousness qua an empirical mental state, which is all that Reinhold is speaking of. The absolute subject, the I, is not given by empirical intuition; it is, instead, posited by intellectual intuition. And the absolute object, the not-I, is that which is posited in opposition to the I. Neither of these occur in empirical consciousness except when a representation is related to them. In empirical consciousness they are both present only indirectly, as the representing subject and as what is represented. One is never conscious of the *absolute* subject (the representing subject which would not be represented) or of the *absolute* object (a thing in itself, independent of all representation) as something empirically given. Reinhold might well be reserving discussion of such topics for some future time.

From what has been said so far it follows that insofar as Aenesidemus's objections are aimed at the Principle of Consciousness *in itself* they are groundless. They are, however, appropriate objections to the Principle of Consciousness considered as the *first* principle of all philosophy and as a mere fact, and they make it necessary to establish a new foundation for this principle. It is also noteworthy that so long as Anesidemus remained faithful to his own previously indicated principles he also remained fair to his opponent. This faithfulness and fairness vanish together, as will soon become evident. If his examination had ended at this point he would undoubtedly have performed a service to philosophy and would have laudably earned the respect of all unbiased and independent thinkers. We will now see how much of this respect is left following the continuation of his examination. It is Reinhold's §§6–8 (in which the

original concept of the faculty of representation[9] is determined) which lead this critic to an examination of the distinctive character of the Critical Philosophy, which he finds to consist in this: the nature of our faculty of representation is responsible for many of the characteristic features of the objects of our representations. We also obtain from this a particular insight into the nature of Aenesidemus's skepticism, which ends in a very arrogant dogmatism, and even presupposes that this dogmatism is in part already demonstrated—which runs counter to his
I,11 own previously indicated principles. The skeptic begins by enumerating the assertions which are supposedly found in these paragraphs: (*a*) that the basis of the reality of representations is the faculty of representation; (*b*) that the faculty of representation is already present in a particular manner in advance of all representations (What is this supposed to mean, and where does Reinhold say this?); (*c*) that the faculty of representation is distinct from the representations, in the way in which every cause is distinct from its effects; (*d*) that the concept of the faculty of representation is itself a product of that faculty, and that one only has to develop carefully the concept of mere representation in order to grasp the internal features of the faculty of representation. After enumerating these assertions, Aenesidemus raises the question of how the Elementary Philosophy is supposed to be able to arrive at this effusive knowledge of the *objective existence* of a thing of the sort which the faculty of representation is said to be. Aenesidemus cannot express sufficient amazement that Reinhold, as a Critical philosopher, should make the following inference ("Theory of the Faculty of Representation,"[10] p. 190): "Anyone who admits a representation at the same time admits a faculty of representation." The reviewer, or perhaps anyone very inclined toward amazement, may express no less amazement over the skeptic, for whom only a short time ago nothing was certain except that there are various representations in us, and who now, as soon as he hears the words "faculty of

[9]The concept of a "faculty of representation" (*Vorstellungsvermögen*) is central to Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy. Kant had identified two "faculties of the mind": a passive faculty of intuition (which, he maintained, was for human beings identical to sensibility) and an active faculty of understanding. Though Kant himself was willing to speculate that these two distinct "stems of knowledge" might indeed "spring from a common root," he insisted that any such root is quite unknown to us (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A15/B29). It was precisely this "hidden root" which Reinhold claimed to have uncovered. From an analysis of the "Principle of Consciousness" he deduced that original "faculty of representation" which must underlie the faculties of intuition and understanding.

[10]The "Theory of the Faculty of Representation" constitutes the first portion of Reinhold's system (as presented in vol. I of *Beyträge*). The second portion, which corresponds roughly to Kant's Aesthetic, Analytic, and Dialectic of Reason, is titled "Theory of the Faculty of Knowledge." By far the most original portion of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy is the first part, in which he claims to have provided Kant's transcendental analysis of the conditions of possible experience with a foundation lacking in (albeit presupposed by) Kant's own writings.

representation," can think only of some sort of thing (round or square?) which exists as a thing in itself, *independently* of *its being represented*, and indeed, exists as a thing which *represents*. The reader will soon see that this interpretation involves no injustice to our skeptic. The faculty of representation exists *for* the faculty of representation and *through* the faculty of representation: this is the circle within which every finite understanding, that is, every understanding that we can conceive, is necessarily confined. Anyone who wants to escape from this circle does not understand himself and does not know what he wants. With this single principle the reviewer excuses himself from mentioning anything further that Aenesidemus has to say on this subject, for in the course of saying it he obviously either misunderstands Reinhold or else misinterprets him, reproaching the Elementary Philosophy for making claims which he has first read into it.

Since, according to this misinterpretation, Reinhold provides nothing
I,12 which would confirm the characteristic principles of the Critical Philosophy, the critic now turns to those proofs provided by the founder of this philosophy himself in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. A brief exposition of Humean skepticism precedes the examination of Kant. "Hume himself certainly did not seriously think that all of our representations are derived from things, from the impressions that they make upon us; for he could not have thought this without assuming in advance the validity of the causal law (according to which our impressions are caused by things). But this is of course what Hume contested. Thus he could not have held this view concerning the origin of representations without the grossest inconsistency. Instead, he only advanced this view, along with the Lockean system which then prevailed among his countrymen, hypothetically, in order to permit this system to refute itself. Hume's own true system consists of the following propositions: (1) That which is to be known has to be represented. (2) Real knowledge has to be connected with things other than itself. (3) There is no principle which would enable us to know anything concerning objects distinct from our representations and, as it were, existing in themselves. (4) Neither the principle of causality nor that of contradiction can help to provide a basis for the desired knowledge." The question whether or not this is a correct representation of Hume's system may be ignored, for the issue is not whether Hume's skepticism is refuted, but whether all skepticism is refuted. It is enough to admit that the system in question is a skeptical one, for it appears to be seeking something that it despairs of finding. The question is whether or not this system is refuted by Kant. Aenesidemus says that it is not, (1) "because in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant infers that just because we can *entertain the thought* that the structure of our minds is the sole foundation for synthetic judgments, our mind *in itself really* must be this foundation. Thus he presupposes the validity of the

very mode of inference with which Hume is concerned." In regard to
I,13 this the present reviewer requests two things of the skeptic: (*a*) that he explain to the public—quickly, clearly, and distinctly—what it can mean to say that something is *independent of our thinking* and is *in itself* the basis of our judgments, when this same thing is itself *a thought;* (*b*) that he indicate the passage in Kant's writings where he has found this absurdity expressed. "Kant says that the mind provides the foundation of certain forms of synthetic judgment. Here he obviously is presupposing *that* these forms require a foundation and is, therefore, already presupposing that which is supposed to be in question, the validity of the causal law. He presupposes that these forms must have a *real* ground." But if one says merely that *we* are required to seek a foundation for these forms and to place this foundation in our mind (and nothing more is being said), then the principle of sufficient reason is at first being employed as merely logically valid. But since that which is thereby established exists only as a thought, then one might think that the *logical* foundation of a thought is at the same time its *real* or *existential* foundation. Aenesidemus further denies that Kant has refuted skepticism, (2) "because Kant has not even proved that our mind provides the *only* conceivable foundation for synthetic judgments." If this assertion could be shown to be true, then it would of course count decisively against the Critical Philosophy, even though Aenesidemus has so far managed to refute only what no one has affirmed and to demand only what no one understands. He provides the following two arguments in support of his contention: (*a*) "It by no means follows from the fact that we can explain and conceive something in only one way at present that we will never be able to conceive it differently." This would be an appropriate remark to make against an empirical proof, but not against an a priori proof from first principles. If the principle of identity and contradiction is proposed (as it should be) as the first principle of all philosophy (for the construction of which system Kant has provided all the information possible, since he himself had no intention of actually constructing it),[11] then it is
I,14 to be hoped that no one will maintain that at some future date we may perhaps advance to a level of culture where we will be able to conceive the possibility of what is self-contradictory. Aenesidemus's other argument for his contention consists (*b*) in attempting to show the conceivability of a different origin for our forms of judgment. He does this in a manner which makes it obvious that he has not understood the *Critique of Pure Reason,* despite his naïve assurance (placed in the mouth of Hermias) that he has actually read and understood that book. "It is conceivable that all of our knowledge is derived from the effect upon our minds of objects which are *in fact* present, and furthermore that the

[11]See Kant's remarks on this subject in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* A11/B25–A14/B28.

necessity we find in some of our knowledge is produced by things affecting us in a particular manner. Thus, for example, during the time while we are having a sensation we have to think that we are having a sensation, and this necessity comes from outside of us, since the impression comes from outside." The most unfortunate example possible! We do necessarily have to think that the object of this sensation is something *actual* (as opposed to *possible* or *necessary*). But is this immediate relation to our faculty of representation itself supposed to be something outside of us and independent of this faculty? "We necessarily perceive the branches of a tree we are observing in the order in which they present themselves to our mind." Yes indeed, thanks to the perception of the individual parts of the tree in continuous space and to the perception of their necessary connection according to the category of interaction! "If we were entirely unacquainted with the things in themselves, then we could not know that certain determinations in us could *not* have been produced by things in themselves." But if things in themselves, independent of our faculty of representation, are unable to produce *any* determinations *whatsoever* in us, then we can very well know that they are not responsible for the determinations actually present in us now. "Deriving the necessity and universal validity of our knowledge from the mind does not make the existence of this necessity the least bit more comprehensible than deriving this necessity and universal validity from the
I,15 manner in which we are affected by external objects." What can "existence" and "comprehensible" mean here? Should we perhaps seek a still higher foundation for that necessity which is assumed to have its foundation totally in our mind? Should this unconditional necessity which is discovered in our minds be conditioned by being derived from, explained, and comprehended in terms of something higher? And where should we look for this higher foundation? *Within* us, where we have already arrived at absolute autonomy? Should *absolute* autonomy be *based upon* something else? This is self-contradictory. Or should we look *outside of ourselves* for this higher foundation? But this *passage* from the external to the internal or vice versa is precisely what is in question. It is precisely the task of the Critical Philosophy to show that no such passage is required, that everything which occurs in our mind can be completely explained and comprehended on the basis of the mind itself. The Critical Philosophy does not even dream of trying to answer a question which it considers contradictory to reason. This philosophy points out to us that circle from which we cannot escape. Within this circle, on the other hand, it furnishes us with the greatest coherence in all of our knowledge. "The *Critique of Pure Reason* has not proven (as it claims to do) that the a priori representations and judgments which are said to be in *us* are merely forms of empirical knowledge, which can possess validity and meaning only in relation to empirical intuition. For there re-

mains another way of conceiving of the relation between a priori concepts and things, a way other than considering the concepts to be merely the conditions and forms of our knowledge of things. To be specific, we can conceive of the concepts being related to the things by means of a *preestablished harmony,* so that one's a priori representations would have the same content that they would have obtained from the objective properties of things in themselves, if these things had been able to affect the mind." Even if these a priori forms of judgment are not themselves unities (for unity cannot be encountered in something which is in itself multiple), is not harmony at least the unification of different elements into one? Our a priori representations on the one hand and the objective properties of the things in themselves on the other would then amount
I,16 to two things which are at least numerically distinct. And would not that third thing, which is supposed to be neither representation nor thing but to unite both of them in itself, be some sort of faculty of representation? Our faculty of representation is of course not like this, as Aenesidemus himself admits in his hypothesis. He must, therefore, be talking about a faculty of representation of a sort different from ours. But for us such a faculty of representation (i.e., one which does not judge according to the principle of identity and contradiction) is quite inconceivable, and thus so is that ostensible harmony which is supposed to be found in such a faculty of representation. "There is nothing absurd in the hypothesis of such a preestablished harmony between our a priori representations and the things which exist objectively," continues Aenesidemus. Should we agree with him on this? Aenesidemus asks whether it is as a thing in itself, as a noumenon, or as a transcendental Idea that the mind is considered to be the foundation of a priori knowledge. It is certainly not as a thing in itself, as Aenesidemus quite correctly denies. And "according to Kant's own statements, the category of causality cannot be applied to a *noumenon.*" Yet in reaching the conclusion that the mind is the foundation of a priori knowledge, the principle of sufficient reason is not being applied as a materially valid principle, but merely as a logically valid one. (Though insofar as the mind is *mere intellect,* the logical principle turns out to be a material one as well.) The mind is a noumenon insofar as it is the ultimate foundation for any particular forms of thought at all. It is a transcendental Idea insofar as these forms of thought are considered to be unconditionally necessary laws. But it is a transcendental Idea which is distinguished from all other transcendental ideas by the fact that it is realized through intellectual intuition, through the *I am,* and indeed, through the *I simply am, because I am.*[12] Aenesidemus's objections against

[12]"Ich bin schlechthin, weil ich bin." This striking expression occurs again in exactly the same form at the beginning of Fichte's *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (*SW,* I: 98; *H/L,* p. 99): "I am absolutely, because I am." Indeed, this formula recurs so frequently in Fichte's Jena writings that it might well serve as the unofficial motto of the early *Wissenschaftslehre.*

this procedure are all based upon his desire to make the absolute existence and autonomy of the I, which is valid only *for the I itself,* into something which is valid *in itself*—we do not know how or for whom. The I is *what* it is, it is *because* it is, and it is *for* the I. Our knowledge can extend no further than this. How then is the Critical system different from what was previously described as the Humean one? The difference consists entirely in this: the Humean system holds open the possibility that we might someday be able to go beyond the boundary of the human
I,17 mind, whereas the Critical system proves that such progress is absolutely impossible, and it shows that the thought of a thing possessing existence and specific properties *in itself* and apart from any faculty of representation is a piece of whimsy, a pipe dream, a nonthought. And to this extent the Humean system is skeptical and the Critical system is dogmatic—and indeed *negatively* so.

Examination of §§ 9–14. In §9 Reinhold says that the mere representation has to consist of two different component parts, and Aenesidemus believes that this conclusion must have been arrived at from the following major premise: Everything which can be related to various sorts of objects must comprise within itself various component parts. And it is of course not difficult for Aenesidemus to refute this deduction. But he omitted a condition from the major premise which he has attributed to Reinhold, namely, the condition that the different objects [to which this something is to be related] are themselves supposed to be distinguished for the first time solely through this relation. Yet when this conclusion is added then it is clear that if x is supposed to be $= A$ and $= B$, then x must include a y, which is $= A$ and a z, which is $= B$, and that the denial of this is self-contradictory. Aenesidemus's distinction, which is encountered again here, between a *real* difference between the two component parts of the mere representation and a difference merely *in thought* deserves no serious mention. For what sort of thing can a mere representation in itself and apart from a faculty of representation be? And how else could component parts of a mere representation differ from each other except insofar as they are distinguished from each other by the representing subject? Can Aenesidemus be serious in making this overly free distinction, or is he teasing the public? In §§ 10–11 Reinhold designates *form* as that in the representation which pertains to the subject and *matter* as that which pertains to the object. Aenesidemus's objections to these designations seem to this reviewer better founded. Aenesidemus says that these designations could equally well be reversed, and the reviewer has also never been able to consider them, in the position which they here occupy, as anything other than arbitrary labels. (If, as the Elementary Philosophy explicitly maintains, A and B are entirely unknown and undetermined before being related to x, then they only receive their predi-
I,18 cates through the two different component parts found in x, namely, y and z. But *how* A differs from B can only become known from the way y

differs from z.) Now if these predicates are being employed merely as arbitrary labels and if nothing is being inferred from them, then there is nothing to be said against that. However, Aenesidemus (correctly, it seems to this reviewer) notes that the inference which is later drawn, namely, that matter must be *given* and form must be *produced*, is based purely upon this account.

Finally the critic turns to what he takes to be the chief mistake of the Elementary Philosophy and the basis of all its errors, viz: "It is not merely something in the representation which is related to the subject and something else which is related to the object; rather, it is the *entire* representation which is related to both subject and object, though related differently to each. To the subject, the representation is related in the way that every property is related to its subject; to the object, it is related in the way that every symbol is related to what it symbolizes. Reinhold overlooked this difference in the very manner of relating, and thus he thought that the only way of explaining the possibility of relating something to two different things was by presupposing two different component parts of the representation itself." Considered by itself, this is quite correct, though, rather than employing Aenesidemus's terms, the reviewer would prefer to say that the representation is related to the object as the effect is related to its cause and to the subject as the accident is related to the substance. Yet this truth cannot be so entirely hidden from Reinhold as Aenesidemus believes, for Reinhold ascribes to the subject the form of the *entire* representation and to the object the matter of the *entire* representation. But if it is true that subject and object are determined merely by their relation to the representation and that prior to this they are completely unknown, then how is Aenesidemus able to refer the representation to an object as its *cause* (or, as he says, as what is *symbolized*), unless there is something in the representation itself which indicates that it is originally an *effect* or a *symbol*? And how is he able to refer the representation to a subject, unless there is something distinguishable within the representation itself which indicates that it is an accident or a predicate?

1,19 Concerning the suggestion in §13 that no object can be represented as a thing in itself, Aenesidemus says: "It is simply ingrained in the entire structure of our nature that we can be satisfied with our knowledge only when we have completely seen the connection and agreement between our representations and the features contained within them and something *which exists entirely independently of them.*" Thus, here at the foundation of this new skepticism, we clearly and distinctly have that old mischief which, until Kant, was perpetrated with the thing in itself. It seems to the reviewer anyway that neither Kant nor Reinhold has by any means declared himself loudly and strongly enough against this mischief, which has been the common source of all the objections—skeptical as well as

dogmatic—which have been raised against the Critical Philosophy. However, it is by no means ingrained in human nature to think of a thing independent of *any* faculty of representation *at all;* on the contrary, it is downright impossible to do so. But Kant did not trace the pure forms of intuition—space and time—back to one first principle, as he did the categories (nor could he have done so, given his intentions, which were merely to prepare the way for science). Since these forms of intuition could appear to Kant to be merely the forms of the *human* faculty of representation, it of course remained possible after him to think about the properties which things might have for some nonhuman faculty of representation. And Kant himself, with his frequently repeated distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in themselves, to a certain extent authorized the thought of the properties which things would have for a nonhuman faculty of representation—though for Kant the distinction between things as they appear to us and as they are in themselves is certainly supposed to have validity only provisionally and only for him. But no matter how often one pretends to the contrary, no person has ever had or can have Aenesidemus's thought of a thing which has reality and distinctive properties independent not merely of the human faculty of representation, but of any and every intellect. *In addition, one always thinks of oneself, as an intellect striving to know the thing.*

I,20 This was why the immortal Leibniz, who saw a little further than most of his followers, necessarily had to endow his thing in itself, or monad, with the power of representation. And if only his inferences had not transcended that circle within which the human mind is enclosed (which was the only thing that Leibniz, who saw everything else, failed to see), then they would have been incontestably correct: *the thing would be constituted in itself just as it represented itself to itself.* This circle was discovered by Kant. Following Kant, Reinhold performed an immortal service by calling the attention of philosophizing reason to the fact that philosophy in its entirety has to be traced back to one single first principle, and that one will not discover the system of the human mind's permanent modes of acting until one has discovered the keystone of this system. (Without Reinhold, philosophizing reason might perhaps have occupied itself for a long time with commenting and recommenting upon Kant, without ever discovering the distinctive character of his system, for this cannot be discovered by anyone who does not open up his own way to its discovery.) Suppose that further advances along the path which Reinhold, to his credit, has cleared for us should reveal the following: that the most immediately certain thing of all, "I am," is also valid only *for* the I; that all that is not-I *is* for the I only; it is only through its relation to an I that the not-I obtains all of the determinations of this a priori being; that, however, all of these determinations, insofar as they can be known a priori, become absolutely necessary upon the mere condition of a rela-

tion between a not-I and any I at all. From this it would follow that the notion of a thing in itself, to the extent that this is supposed to be a not-I which is not opposed to any I, is self-contradictory, and that the thing is actually constituted in itself in just that way in which it must be thought to be constituted by any conceivable intelligent I (i.e., by any being which thinks in accordance with the principle of identity and contradiction). It would also follow that what is logically true for any intellect which is conceivable by a finite intellect is at the same time true in reality and that there is no other truth but this. It would then no longer occur to anyone to make the claim, which Aenesidemus repeats: namely, that the Critical Philosophy is idealistic and interprets everything as illusion, that is, that
I,21 this philosophy assumes that an intellect can be conceived of apart from some relation to something intelligible. Aenesidemus takes up Kant's proof against idealism from the *Critique of Pure Reason* and shows, quite correctly, that *this* proof fails to refute the Berkeleian idealism against which Aenesidemus thinks it is directed. But he could have read in so many words on page 274 of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that this proof is directed not against Berkeley's idealism ("the foundation of which has already been removed in the Transcendental Aesthetic"), but rather against Descartes' "problematic idealism."[13] And this proof clearly shows, against such idealism, that the consciousness of the *thinking* I, as understood by Descartes himself, is possible only under the condition that there be a not-I which is *to be thought.*

After having demonstrated the untenability of the foundation upon which Aenesidemus erects his skepticism, the reviewer is perhaps justified in excusing himself from mentioning Aenesidemus's additional objections against the theoretical portion of the Critical Philosophy in general, and in particular, against Reinhold's exposition of it. The reviewer does so in order to say something about Aenesidemus's objections to Kant's moral theology. "This moral theology infers that, from the fact that something is commanded, it follows that the sole conditions under which this command can be fulfilled really do exist." Aenesidemus's protests against this mode of inference are based upon his deficient grasp of the true difference between theoretical and practical philosophy. These protests are summarized approximately in the following syllogism: Until we decide *whether* it is *possible* to do or to refrain from doing something, we cannot judge *that* we are commanded to do it or to refrain from doing it. But whether an action is possible or impossible is something that can be decided only according to theoretical principles. Therefore, even the judgment *that* something is commanded is based upon theoretical principles. That which Kant first infers *from* the com-

[13]See the "Refutation of Idealism" which Kant added to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* Bxxxix–x and B274–79.

mand has got to be already shown and decided *before* any command at all can be rationally accepted. It is far from being the case that the recogni-
I,22 tion of a command can provide the basis for the conviction that the conditions for its fulfillment actually do exist. On the contrary, that recognition can only follow upon this conviction. One can see that Aenesidemus is assailing the actual foundation of Kantian moral theology, namely, the primacy of practical over theoretical reason. But one can also easily see how he has made this assault easy for himself. What we should *do* or *refrain from doing,* that is, what we should effectively accomplish in the world of appearances, is of course something which must be governed by the laws of this world. But who is talking here about *doing* or *refraining from doing?* Unlike an effective cause capable of producing something beyond itself, the ethical law is not at first directed at a physical force. It is, instead, directed at a hyperphysical faculty of desire or endeavor[14] (or whatever one wishes to call it). The ethical law is not at first supposed to produce any action at all, but only the constant endeavor toward an action, even if this action, hindered by the force of nature, should turn out never to have any *efficacy* in the material world. In other words, and in order to represent the elements of this mode of inference in their highest abstraction: If, in intellectual intuition, the I *is because* it is and *is what* it is, then it is, to that extent, *self-positing,* absolutely independent and autonomous. The I in empirical consciousness, however, the I as intellect, *is* only in relation to something intelligible, and is, to that extent, dependent. But the I which is thereby opposed to itself is supposed to be not two, but one—which is impossible, since "dependence" contradicts "independence." Since, however, the I cannot relinquish its absolute independence, a striving is engendered: the I strives to make what is intelligible dependent upon itself, in order thereby to bring that I which entertains representations of what is intelligible into unity with the self-positing I. This is what it means to say that *reason is practical.* In the pure I, reason is not practical, nor is it practical in the I as intellect. Reason is practical only insofar as it strives to unify these two. This is not the place to show that these are the first principles which must underlie Kant's own expositions (granted that he never establishes them specifi-
I,23 cally). Nor is it the place to show how a practical philosophy arises when the striving of the intelligent I (which in itself is hyperphysical) is represented, that is, when one *de*scends the same steps which one *as*cended in

[14] "Begehrungs- oder Bestrebungs-Vermögen." The term is Reinhold's. The "Theory of the Faculty of Desire" constituted the final portion of Reinhold's system of Elementary Philosophy, corresponding to the "practical" portion of Kant's Critical Philosophy. In the second edition of his *Critique of All Revelation* (1793), Fichte included an entirely new section titled "Theory of the Will," which represents a first, somewhat tentative effort to develop a more adequate theory of this *Begehrungsvermögen* (*SW,* V: 16–39; *AA* I, 1: 135–53). English translation by Garrett Green, *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 40–59.

theoretical philosophy. This unity—an I which, in determining itself, determines all that is not-I (the idea of divinity)—is the final goal of this striving. When the goal is represented by the intelligent I as lying beyond itself, this striving is *belief* (belief in God). This striving cannot cease short of its goal; that is, the intellect cannot consider any single moment of its existence in which the goal remains unachieved as the last (belief in immortality). In regard to these ideas, however, nothing more than *belief* is possible; that is, the intellect has no empirical sensation as the object of its representation, but only the necessary striving of the I—and thus it must be for all eternity. But such belief is far from being merely a *probable opinion.* On the contrary, it is the innermost conviction of this reviewer anyway that this belief has the same degree of certainty as the immediately certain "I am"—a certainty which infinitely transcends that objective certainty which becomes possible only through the mediation of the intelligent I. Aenesidemus, of course, wants an objective proof of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. What can he be thinking of when he wishes this? Does objective certainty perhaps appear to him incomparably superior to—mere—subjective certainty? The *I am* itself has only subjective certainty, and, so far as we can conceive of the self-consciousness of God, He himself is for Himself subjective. And now even an "objective existence for immortality"! (Aenesidemus's own words). If any being which intuits its own existence in time could say to itself at any moment of its existence, "*Now* I am eternal!" then it would *not* be eternal. Far from practical reason having to recognize the superiority of theoretical reason, the entire existence of practical reason is founded on the *conflict* between the self-determining element within us
I,24 and the theoretical-knowing element. And practical reason itself would be canceled if this conflict were eliminated.[15]

This complete misunderstanding of the basis of moral belief also underlies a second remark by Aenesidemus: he claims that there is no difference between the mode of inference in the moral proof [of God's existence] and the mode of inference in the cosmo-theological proof criticized by Kant; for in this latter proof too it is inferred that, since a world exists, the only conceivable conditions for its possibility must exist as well. The major difference between these proofs is that the cosmo-theological one is based entirely upon theoretical reason, whereas the moral proof is based upon the conflict between theoretical reason and the I in itself. Theoretical reason must at least agree with itself concerning that about which it has to prove something. Of course, it first achieves unity within itself only by conceiving the *world* as an uncondi-

[15]Of this passage Fritz Medicus quite aptly observed: "In these sentences . . . the *Aenesidemus* review contains the basic architectonic thought underlying the Fichtean system, and expresses it in the simplest possible form, stripped of all the details which fill it out." *Fichtes Leben,* 2d ed., p. 65.

tioned totality, and hence by conceiving a *first* cause for this world. But precisely through this thought of such a first cause, theoretical reason falls again into an insoluble conflict with itself, because, in accordance with the laws of theoretical reason itself, every cause that it can conceive of must have its own cause in turn. Consequently, although the task of seeking a first cause remains, no cause that is discovered can ever be the first one. Thus, without contradicting itself, reason can never actually realize the idea of a first cause, nor can it take this Idea to be something specific and something which has been discovered. But no proof which ends in self-contradiction can be valid.

The reviewer has felt duty-bound to assess this book in detail, in part because it really does contain many good and apt remarks; in part because the author has complained in advance about unproved verdicts (of which, it is to be hoped, he will not accuse this review); in part, because this book has actually attracted some attention here and there, and some readers are said to have concluded from it that the Critical Philosophy is a lost cause; in part, finally, to help certain people overcome the prejudice of thinking that the objections to the Kantian philosophy have not
I,25 been properly appreciated and that one would just as soon forget about them, since one has no well-founded reply to make to them. This reviewer wishes for nothing more fervently than that his assessment might contribute toward convincing a good many independent thinkers that the Critical Philosophy, in itself and in its inner content, still stands as firmly as ever, though much labor is still required in order to arrange the materials into a well-constructed and unshakable whole. May this conviction rouse them—each in his place and to the best of his abilities—to contribute to this lofty goal.

II

Concerning Human Dignity

Editor's Preface

The circumstances under which this little lecture was delivered and published have long been surrounded with confusion. The title page of the original published text indicates neither a place of publication nor a publisher. The date is given as 1794 and the subtitle announces that this lecture was delivered by Fichte "at the conclusion of his philosophical lectures." Many readers, including Fichte's son and first editor, I. H. Fichte, mistakenly assumed this lecture *Ueber die Würde des Menschen* to have been the concluding one in the series of "private" lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* which Fichte delivered during his first semester in Jena. In fact, however, *Concerning Human Dignity* was the final lecture in the series Fichte delivered in Zurich in the spring of 1794, just prior to his move to Jena.

Not much is known about these "Zurich lectures." They were initiated at the request of J. K. Lavater for the benefit of Zurich's small circle of intelligentsia and were devoted to the general topic of "the Critical Philosophy."[1] From mid-February to the end of April a small group assembled regularly in Lavater's house to hear Fichte's lectures. It was, of course, during this same time that Fichte received his call to Jena and

[1]The circumstances behind Lavater's invitation were later recounted by one of those who attended the lectures, George Gessner, in his *Johann Kasper Lavaters Lebensbeschreibung*, vol. II (Winterthur: in der Steinerischen Buchhandlung, 1803), p. 275: "It was around this time that Fichte, who had already spent several years in Zurich and who was now married to one of our citizens, received the call to Jena. Lavater always had the highest regard for everything associated with powerful thinking and intellectual strength. . . . In those days the Kantian philosophy had not yet found a home in Zurich, as indeed it still has not. Yet Lavater nevertheless wished to become better acquainted with this philosophy by hearing a man who had made such a stir lecture on it. 'It would,' he said to me, 'be irresponsible of us to permit such a person to depart our city without our having benefited from his presence.' Soon thereafter a circle of thoughtful and truth-loving men assembled and asked Fichte to lecture to them on the Critical Philosophy, which he did with cheerful willingness."

was frantically engaged in trying to work out the consequences of his own new philosophical discoveries as well as seeking a suitable way to communicate them from the lecturn. Accordingly, he took full advantage of the opportunity presented by Lavater's invitation and presented the first version of his new system in these Zurich lectures. In a letter to Böttiger, March 1, 1794, Fichte mentions "some lectures which I am now delivering before some of the leading intellectuals and statesmen of Zurich. . . . These lectures are concerned with the concept and first principles of philosophy, and at the same time provide an overview of my new system."[2] Unfortunately, no copy of these Zurich lectures survives, though it is possible to form some idea of their contents from the description Fichte projected in early February.[3] From this and other evidence it seems clear that the Zurich lectures sketched a preliminary version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and included much of the material that later appeared in revised form in *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*[4]

On April 24 or 25, Fichte delivered the final lecture in this series. This lecture, however, forms no part of the system Fichte had been presenting to his listeners. Instead, it is concerned with the ancient question of man's nature and is dedicated by the author to his listeners, "not as an inquiry, but rather as an outpouring of enraptured feelings in memory of those blissful hours that he has passed with them in a common striving toward truth." Though the evidence is scanty, it seems reasonable to suppose that Fichte had this lecture printed privately and distributed it as a commemorative gesture to those who had attended the series of lectures. This would certainly explain the dedication.

The actual content of the lecture *Concerning Human Dignity* requires little comment. It is a skillful piece of public oratory, intended, as the dedication acknowledges, to move the listeners more than to inform them. It was certainly never intended to be an adequate presentation of Fichte's philosophical views.[5] Much of the text is devoted to the passion-

[2]These Zurich letters are also mentioned in Fichte's letter to Hufeland, March 8, 1794, as well as in his letter of March 1, 1794, to Reinhold (translated below in Section X, no. 10).

[3]See Fichte to Lavater, beginning of February 1794 (translated below, Section X, no. 9).

[4]In his letter to Böttiger, March 1, 1794, Fichte announces his intention of using the texts of his Zurich lectures in preparing the "prospectus" later titled *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* In a letter to Lavater, June 14, 1794, however, he describes his Jena lectures (published as *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) as "the lectures that I had the good fortune of delivering before you and your friends—reworked, thought through for a second time, and here and there more precisely worded." (The previously quoted passage from Gessner's account of the Zurich lectures continues: "The lectures which Fichte delivered to us were later published in reworked and expanded form as *Grundriss der Wissenschaftslehre.*" Fichte, of course, never published a book with this title. The book Gessner presumably had in mind was the *Foundations.*)

[5]Reinhold, for example, complained in a letter to his friend Baggessen that he found *Concerning Human Dignity* unintelligible and bombastic (Reinhold to Baggessen, September 2, 1794; *FvB,* p. 20). Baggesen, who had attended Fichte's lectures in Zurich, replied that

ate avowal of such conventional liberal themes as the unity of mankind, the social responsibilities of "higher men," and the inevitable progress of man along the ladder of human development. Nevertheless, *Concerning Human Dignity* is not without interest to the student of Fichte's philosophy.

One noteworthy feature of the lecture is the way in which Kant's theoretical conclusions are dramatized and radically extended. Kant himself had written that "the unity of apperception is thus the transcendental ground of the necessary conformity to law of all appearances in one experience" and had spoken of man's understanding as "the lawgiver of nature." But he was careful to explain that this applied only to "nature in general" and that, though the categories determine that nature shall obey laws, these a priori categories do not determine the special laws according to which appearances are specifically determined. Thus, for Kant, though all of nature is *subject* to the laws of human understanding, nature cannot be said to be *derived* from man.[6] The second paragraph of Fichte's lecture restates the conclusion of Kant's transcendental deduction, but without mentioning Kant's qualifications. We are, instead, directed "to look for everything in the I," and it is the I to which the entire hierarchy of being is said "to owe its existence." Of course a philosopher is not under oath when he engages in "an outpouring of enraptured feeling," and the Kantian scruples are not strictly speaking inconsistent with Fichte's remarks. The significant difference is above all one of style. Fichte's inability to resist such hyperbolic and sensational ways of expressing the conclusions of the Critical Philosophy is largely responsible for his reputation as a "subjective idealist."

Interesting too are Fichte's concluding remarks concerning the "one great unity of spirit" in which all individuals are included, with the accompanying remark, "I will not lead you back to individuality." A footnote disavows any "Spinozistic" implications of this conclusion and qualifies spiritual unity as an ultimate—and unreachable—goal. (So too, at the beginning of the lecture, the unification of nature according to the laws of reason is also described as a process proceeding to infinity.)

In the confines of the lecture *Concerning Human Dignity* there is no room for argument and explanation, and even the legitimate conclusions of transcendental philosophy are inevitably exaggerated by the rhetorical context in which they appear. Taken together, however, the initial remarks about the constitutive role of the I and the concluding assertion of spiritual unity serve to indicate what would soon become—and remain—the central problem for any interpretation of the *Wissen-*

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the lecture could not be properly understood by anyone who had not attended the whole series of lectures it concluded. (Beggessen to Reinhold, September 5, 1794; *FvB*, p. 22).

[6]See Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, A126–27 and B164–65.

schaftslehre, and indeed one of the central problems of the history of German idealism generally, namely, what is the relation between the finite, individual, conscious subject and the one, absolute I?

The text of *Ueber die Würde des Menschen* upon which this translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW,* I: 412–16 (*AA* I, 2: 83–89).

I,412

Concerning Human Dignity

The author dedicates these pages to his patrons and friends, not as an inquiry, but rather as an outpouring of enraptured feeling in memory of those blissful hours that he has passed with them in a common striving toward truth.

We have completely surveyed the human mind and have laid a foundation upon which a scientific system can be erected, a system which will be the appropriate presentation of the *original* system in man. In concluding, let us cast a brief glance over the whole.

Philosophy teaches us to seek for everything within the I. It is the I which first brings order and harmony into dead, formless matter. *Regularity* comes from man alone, surrounding him and extending as far as he can see, and as he expands the sphere of his observations, order and
I,413 harmony are further extended as well. His observation assigns to each of the infinitely many and different things its proper place, so that none may displace any other. It brings unity into infinite diversity. Human observation holds together the planets, which, thanks to it, constitute just *one* organized body. Thanks to it, the suns move in their allotted paths. From the lichen to the seraphim, this immense hierarchy owes its existence to the I. The system of the entire spiritual world lies in *it*, and man justifiably expects that the law he gives to himself and to this world must hold for this world. The I contains the sure guarantee that order and harmony will spread outward from it into infinity, where there is neither order nor harmony, the guarantee that the culture of the universe will

The title page of the original edition includes the note "delivered by J. G. Fichte at the conclusion of his philosophical lectures."

advance with the culture of man. Through man, all that is still unformed and unordered will dissolve into the most beautiful order, and what is already harmonious will become still more harmonious, in accordance with still undeveloped laws. Into turmoil, man will bring order, and into universal devastation, design. Thanks to him, decay will create and death will summon to a new and splendid life.

This is man, considered merely as an observing intelligence. What then is man when we take his practical and active capacities into consideration?

Not only does he *place* a *necessary* order in things; he gives them the order that he *voluntarily* selects. Nature wakens where man trods, and at the sight of him prepares herself to receive from him a new and more beautiful creation. Even the human body is the most spiritual which can be formed from the matter which is available. The breeze becomes gentler in man's atmosphere, the climate milder; nature is exhilarated by the anticipation of being transformed by man into a domicile and into a guardian of living beings. Man orders the raw materials to organize themselves according to his ideal and to provide him with what he requires. For him, what was previously cold and dead waxes into nourish-
I,414 ing grain, refreshing fruit, and stimulating grapes—and will transform itself again into something else, just as soon as he so commands. The animals are improved around him; under his intelligent eyes they cast off their wildness and receive their wholesome food from the hand of their master, whom they repay with willing obedience.

Furthermore, souls are improved around man as well. The more of a man one is, the more deeply and widely one affects other men. Mankind will never fail to recognize that which bears the true seal of mankind. Every human mind and heart opens itself to any pure outpouring of humanity. Around the higher man others form a circle, in which those with the greatest humanity are nearest the center. Their spirits strive and struggle to unite and to form but one spirit in many bodies. They are all one understanding and one will, and they stand there as fellow workers on mankind's great project, which is its only possible one. The higher man forcibly drags his age onto a higher level of mankind. Looking back, mankind is astonished at the chasm it has leaped. With the arms of a giant, the higher man pulls what he can from the almanac of the human species.

Shatter the hut of clay in which man lives! By the very nature of his existence, he is independent of all that is outside of him. Even within his clay hut he has a feeling of this existence—at those moments of exaltation when time, space, and all that is not himself disappear, when his spirit forcefully tears itself free of his body and then, just as freely, returns to the body, in order to pursue those purposes which the spirit

can accomplish only through the body. Divide the last particles of dust that enclose him: he will *still* exist, and he *will* exist because he will *will to* exist. Through himself, through his own power, he is eternal.

I,415 Hinder and frustrate his plans! They may be delayed, but what are thousands and thousands of years in the almanac of mankind? No more than the gentle dream of the morning once we have awakened! Man persists and continues to *act*. When he seems to you to have vanished, he has only widened his sphere. What seems to you to be death is his readiness for a higher life. The *colors* and *external forms* of his projects may disappear, but his *project* remains the same: at every moment of his existence he wrests something new from outside of himself into his own circle, and he will continue to do so until everything has been swallowed up in this circle, until all matter bears the stamp of his activity and until all spirits constitute one spirit with his own.

This is man. This is everyone who can say to himself, "I am a man." Should he not stand in sacred awe of himself? Should he not tremble and quake before his own majesty! This is everyone who can say to me "I am." You, wherever you live, you who merely bear a human face—whether you still live much like an animal, planting sugarcane beneath the slavemaster's lash, or whether you are sitting on the coast of Tierra del Fuego, warming yourself at a flame you did not kindle and when it dies out crying bitterly that it will not remain lit by itself, or whether you seem to me to be the most wretched and depraved villain—you are nevertheless, for all that, what I am. For you can say to me, "I am," and are, therefore, my companion and brother.[1] Once I too certainly stood upon that rung of mankind where you are now standing: for it *is* a rung of mankind, and on this ladder there is no leaping. Perhaps I stood there without the capacity for clear consciousness; perhaps I passed that spot so quickly that I had no time to become conscious of my situation—but I certainly stood there. And though it may take a million years, or a million times a million (what is time!), you too will certainly stand someday upon the rung where *I* stand *now*. Someday you will certainly be at a

I,416 level where I will be able to influence you and you will be able to influence me. Someday you will be drawn into my circle and I will be drawn into yours. Someday I will recognize you too as a fellow worker on my great project. I am an I, and this is what everyone who is an I is to me. Should I not tremble before the majesty contained in the image of man? Should I not quake before the divinity who, though perhaps concealed in darkness, certainly inhabits the temple which bears this human stamp?

[1]Compare this passage with the similar (indeed, almost identical) passage with which Fichte's second *Lecture concerning the Scholar's Vocation* concludes.

Earth, heaven, time, space, the limitations of sensousness: they all vanish from me at this thought. And should not individuality also vanish? I will not lead you back to individuality.

*All individuals are included in the one great unity of pure spirit.**[2] Let this serve as my concluding word, with which I commend myself to your memory—as well as the memory to which I commend you.

*Even without being familiar with my system, it is impossible to consider this thought to be Spinozistic, at least if one will survey the entire movement of this meditation. The unity of pure spirit is for me an *unreachable ideal,* an ultimate goal, which, however, will never be actual.

[2]A very similar passage occurs in the second *Lecture concerning the Scholar's Vocation* (*SW,* p. 310), where Fichte once again goes on to emphasize the *inobtainability* of the desired union between individuals.

III

Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

Editor's Preface

The winter of 1793–94 was for Fichte a period of philosophical discovery. Under the provocation of Aenesidemus's skeptical attack on Kant and Reinhold, Fichte had been forced to reexamine his own philosophical standpoint and to reconsider the entire issue of the nature and status of philosophy. It was in the course of this process of reconsideration that he hit upon what would prove to be the key ideas for his reconstruction of transcendental philosophy, namely, a clear appreciation of the actively self-constitutive character of the I; a resolve to construct a new, "scientific" system of transcendental philosophy along the lines anticipated by Reinhold, but taking as his starting point not the concept of representation, but rather that of the self-productive Act (*Tathandlung*) of the I; and finally, a new and deeper understanding of the relationship between the theoretical I (the "intellect") and the practical, striving I.

Following his initial, private efforts to develop these new insights (in the unpublished "Eigne Meditationen über ElementarPhilosophie/Practische Philosophie"), Fichte felt sufficiently confident to make a tentative public announcement of his new standpoint (in the *Aenesidemus* review). At the same time he realized that he had done no more than make a promising start. The substantial task of articulating the basic structure and working out the details of the new system still remained to be accomplished. It was at precisely this moment (January 1794) that Fichte received the unexpected invitation to assume Reinhold's vacated chair at Jena.[1] Flattered and delighted as he undoubtedly was by this marvelous

[1]For further information concerning Fichte's "discovery" during the winter of 1793–94 and concerning the first published hints of this discovery, see the editor's introduction and the preface to Section I.

and unexpected opportunity, he nevertheless made a serious effort to postpone his appointment to give himself a full year to develop his new system prior to assuming the post. This is the reason for the ambivalence of his carefully worded reply to the university's official invitation.

> To the extent that I have made any progress as an independent thinker, I have become more and more convinced that, . . . *thanks to the critical attention it has received,* philosophy has come very near to its lofty goal of being a science possessed of certainty—a goal which it has nevertheless not yet reached. One of the chief aims of the studies in which I am presently engaged (and to which I intended to dedicate the leisure I had obtained) was to determine whether this goal should be abandoned or what needed to be done in order to achieve it. Thanks to a fortunate stroke of luck, I have discovered—much sooner than I could have hoped—the path which, in my opinion, must lead in that direction. I have tried this path and believe it to be highly probable that it is the correct one. Had the road to another sort of activity not become open to me at this point, I would have devoted a few years of my life completely and exclusively to this project—one which can only be properly accomplished in a period of uninterrupted leisure. After making a rough estimate of the entire project, I calculate that it will be completely finished by Easter of 1795.
>
> Apart from the interruption and perhaps the complete discontinuation of this project (even if it turns out to be nothing but a new experiment) there would be another inconvenience involved in my beginning my teaching duties by Easter of 1794. A teacher of philosophy has to have a system which (in his own view at least) is completely tenable. At the moment I have no system that fully satisfies me, and would thus be unable to live up to the high expectations of me which are raised by this honorable offer.[2]

When a postponement proved impossible, Fichte had no choice but to accelerate his systematic labors and devote his few remaining months in Zurich to developing his system as far as possible in the short time available. He also had to acknowledge the fact that "this new decision must alter my entire plan of studies, for from now on, instead of continuing with my dry speculations, I will have to plan to communicate them in my lectures."[3] And indeed, the first published version of his new system (viz., the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) was nothing more than the published text of the course of "private"[4] lectures Fichte began giving only a few days after his arrival in Jena on May 18, 1794.

[2]Draft of a letter to C. G. Voigt, January 15, 1794 (see *AA* III, 2: 42–43).

[3]To K. A. Böttiger, February 4, 1794.

[4]As "Professor philosophiae ordinarius supernumerarius" Fichte received a small salary, for which he was, among other things, expected to deliver a series of free "public" lectures to the entire academic community. In addition to these public lectures, he also gave one or more courses of "private" lectures each semester, for which he was paid directly by the attending students.

As part of his preparation, Fichte undertook two projects during the spring. First, he accepted Lavater's timely invitation to deliver a series of lectures on transcendental philosophy.[5] Second, he agreed to write a short "prospectus" of his new system. This text was to be published and circulated in Jena prior to his arrival and was intended as an "advertisement for himself" and "invitation" to prospective students. The idea of writing such a "prospectus" was first suggested by Fichte's Jena friend and confidential correspondent, K. A. Böttinger, who had proposed the idea in response to Fichte's concern about assuming his new position before a published version of his new system had become available. Fichte responded with enthusiasm to Böttinger's suggestion. especially when he learned that he would be able to substitute the projected German-language prospectus for the formal Latin "disputation" normally required of newly appointed professors.[6]

Initially Fichte envisioned his "invitational work" as a short summary of his new standpoint and, accordingly, planned to revise for this purpose the lectures he was then delivering in Zurich.[7] Writing to Gottlieb Hufeland on March 8, 1794, he stated that his prospectus "will establish the *concept* of philosophy in an entirely new manner and will develop the first principles of philosophy up to Reinhold's Principle of Consciousness—for which it will furnish the proof—and will also perhaps establish the first principles of an entirely new sort of practical philosophy." At some point during the next month, however, Fichte altered his conception of this project. Rather than a survey of his still-evolving system, he prepared instead a far more general treatise on "the concept of philosophy." Most of the final text was, accordingly, devoted to matters of philosophical methodology and to a general discussion of how philosophy might become a science. The promised presentation of the first principles of Fichte's new system was relegated to a very brief and schematic final section, whereas the promised deduction of the Principle of Consciousness did not appear at all.

[5]These are the same Zurich lectures discussed in the preface to Section II.

[6]Fichte to Böttiger, February 4, 1794. Böttiger first proposed the German-language "prospectus" in a no longer existent letter to Fichte written during the second half of January 1794. Fichte was officially notified that he could substitute a German-language prospectus for the Latin disputation in a letter from G. C. Voigt, February 17, 1794.

[7]In this letter of March 1, 1794, to Böttiger, Fichte reiterates his enthusiasm for writing a German-language prospectus of his system and thanks his friend for his advice in this matter, adding, "I had materials for this purpose almost completed. For this purpose I would like to have printed at once some lectures which I am currently delivering before some of the leading intellectuals and statesmen of Zurich, with Lavater at the forefront. These lectures concern the concept of philosophy as well as the first principles of the same, while at the same time providing an overview of my new system." This same letter contains Fichte's very first reference to his new system as *Wissenschaftslehre* (Theory of Scientific Knowledge), a name he says he chose in order to distinguish his system from "mere '*love of knowledge*' or '*philosophy.*'"

Unlike most of Fichte's subsequent publications, which were printed from hurriedly prepared lecture manuscripts, *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* was carefully composed and revised, and was intended for the general philosophical reader (and not merely for the use of students attending Fichte's lectures). He devoted unusual care to the style and tone of this work and expressed general satisfaction with the results.[8] The text was sent to the printer by late April and was available in Jena by the second week of May.

The title Fichte chose for his prospectus is significant, for it marks the first appearance in print of the term *Wissenschaftslehre.* However, as Fichte himself carefully noted, *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* was not meant to be a part of the new system itself or even a summary or overview of the same. Instead, it is a collection of loosely related reflections upon the character of philosophy in general, plus a few vague hints about the author's new system. Like some of Fichte's later writings (most notably the two familiar introductions of 1797), it is a text *about* the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and thus does not constitute a part thereof. To employ the terminology proposed by Fichte himself in the preface to the second edition, it is intended to be a work of "critique" rather than a contribution to "philosophy" (or "metaphysics"). The task of "critique" is to investigate the possibility and meaning of metaphysics, while at the same time laying down the method and rules of the same. As Fichte put it in an interesting, unpublished note of 1794–95: "There can be a doctrine of transcendental philosophy, or *Wissenschaftslehre.* [There can also be] a *theory thereof,* which deals with issues such as how it [viz., the *Wissenschaftslehre*] is to be achieved and with what right, that is, with the sort of *validity* it has. The former is based upon the latter. My book *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* Parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason.*"[9]

Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre is of enduring interest to students of the *Wissenschaftslehre* precisely because of its status as "critique." It is Fichte's first and most sustained attempt to philosophize about his own philosophy and to state the goals and methods of the same in clear, nontechnical language. Thus it is indeed, as Fichte himself suggests in the preface to the second edition, an excellent introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Here, more clearly than anywhere else, Fichte explains what he understands by the terms *science* and *system,* as well as

[8]In his letter to Böttinger, April 2, 1794, Fichte mentions the care he is devoting to writing his prospectus and reports upon his efforts "to find an easy and graceful tone to express the principles of a speculation which really goes a good deal deeper than Kant's, but to communicate it in a manner as if it were not a profound speculation." See too Fichte's letter of July 1794 to his old friend F. A. Weisshuhn, responding to the latter's praise of the prose style of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.*

[9]From Fichte's *Nachgelassene Schriften zu Platners "Philosophischen Aphorismen," 1794–1812.* In *AA* II, 4: 53.

how he understands the relationship between science and systematic form.

How is science possible at all? To answer such a question, says Fichte, is the task of a "science of science itself" or "Theory of Scientific Knowledge" (*Wissenschaftslehre*). But is such a "science of science itself" *itself* possible, and if so, what will it be like? This is an issue for "critique" to decide, and thus an analysis of the concept of the "science of science" forms the main topic of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* This analysis reveals the need for an "absolutely certain" first principle for the proposed new science, a demand that provokes a series of important reflections upon the character of "first principles" in general and "absolutely certain" ones in particular. Further reflection on the concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* leads to a consideration of the relationship between its form and its content, as well as to a consideration of the problems involved in demonstrating the consistency, uniqueness, and completeness of the proposed science of science. Other issues treated in this preliminary critique include the relationship between the proposed science of science and the other, special sciences, including logic, and the relationship between such a science and the system of human knowledge itself.

Some of the most interesting portions of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* are devoted to explaining the difference between any act of empirical consciousness (including empirical self-consciousness) and that Act of absolute self-positing expressed in the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre*—an Act of which, Fichte admits, we may never actually be (directly) conscious at all. To be sure, philosophy must deal with "representations," and the act of representation is the "highest act" in which the philosopher as such can engage. But from this it does not follow that representation is the highest act of the human mind. Against Reinhold, Fichte insists that we can and must form the concept of a still higher act and that the principle expressing this highest act of the mind will be the required first principle of our new science. Fichte emphasizes the difference between philosophical reflection and ordinary (or "natural") consciousness and calls special attention to that "free act" of reflection and abstraction with which the former must begin.

Finally, the brief "Hypothetical Division of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" which concludes the first edition deserves to be better known. For even though it is in most respects superseded by the subsequently published detailed presentations of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* it nevertheless offers an instructive overview of the general structure and organizational strategy of Fichte's Jena system. For all of its brevity it sheds valuable light on such problematic issues as the relationship between the "theoretical" and "practical" portions of the system and the distinctive nature of each.

The contemporary reader, no less than the prospective students of

1794, will discover much of interest in *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* It is an essential document for understanding what Fichte was trying to accomplish in his best-known work, *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.* Moreover, by explaining what he considers to be the task and method of any legitimate philosophical system, Fichte provides his readers with criteria and evaluative guidelines which they are encouraged to apply to his own system. Indeed, he expliticly exhorts his readers to take an open-minded, experimental attitude toward his works: to test them by the standards he himself here proposes.

Though Fichte's understanding of his own system underwent rapid change and development, he continued to recognize the unique value of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and authorized a second edition in 1798. Indeed, it continued for years to have a special claim on the affections of its author, who considered it to be the most accessible of all of his technical writings. Thus, he warned in 1797, "for those who have failed to understand my easiest speculative writing, that is, the one concerning the concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* I cannot write anything within the field of speculation which will be easier to understand."[10]

The text of *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie* upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW,* I: 29–81 (*AA* I, 2: 107–63). Like the *SW* text, the translation follows the text of the second edition, which differs in many—mostly very minor—ways from the first edition. (The differences are clearly indicated in the *AA* text, which is based on the first edition.) Most of the changes concern matters as minor as orthography and punctuation, and very few of them are of any philosophical interest. Where the changes seem to involve any significant differences of meaning, the first edition text is translated in the notes. The editor of *SW,* I. H. Fichte, had access to his father's personal library and included some of Fichte's marginal comments to *Concerning the Concept of Wissenschaftslehre* in the *SW* edition of the text. These comments, which are of uneven interest, are also translated in the notes. The most significant changes in the second edition were the addition of a new preface, the omission of the brief "Hypothetical Division of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" which concluded the first edition, and a new appendix reprinting two negative book reviews written by unsympathetic critics—

[10]"Annalen des philosophischen Tons," *SW,* II: 481n. Compare this with the nearly identical comment from the preface to the first edition of *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (*SW,* I: 88; *H/L,* p. 91): "so far as the work as a whole [viz., *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*] is complained of, I confess from the start that in the field of speculation I shall never be able to write anything that will be intelligible to those who have found it beyond them."

the first, a review of the first edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre;* the second, a review of Schelling's "On the Possibility of a Form for All Philosophy." Both prefaces, as well as the "Hypothetical Division," are translated. The appended reviews have not been translated.

Concerning the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* or, of So-called "Philosophy"

I,29

Preface to the First Edition

Reading the modern skeptics, in particular *Aenesidemus*[1] and the excellent writings of Maimon,[2] has convinced the author of this treatise of something which already appeared to be most probable, namely, that despite the recent efforts of the most perspicacious men, philosophy has not yet been raised to the level of a clearly evident science. The author believes that he has found the reason for this, and believes that he has discovered a simple way to satisfy completely all those very well-grounded demands which the skeptics make upon the Critical Philosophy, and in a manner which at the same time provides a way to unite the conflicting claims of the dogmatic and critical systems, just as the Critical Philosophy

The title page of the original edition includes the note "an invitation to the lectures on this science by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, designated professor at the University of Jena."

[1]*Aenesidemus, or Concerning the Foundation of the Elementary Philosophy Propounded in Jena by Professor Reinhold, including a Defense of Skepticism against the Pretensions of the Critique of Reason* (1792). This anonymously published defense of "Humean skepticism" by G. E. Schulze was reviewed by Fichte in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in February 1794. For further information, see the translation of Fichte's review, Section I, above, as well as the editor's preface to the same.

[2]Salomon Maimon (1752–1800) was one of the most original early critics and interpreters of Kant. In his own philosophical writings, Maimon proposed to recast the Critical Philosophy in a self-consciously skeptical mode, dispensing entirely with any vestiges of the doctrine of things in themselves. Maimon's "empirical skepticism" accounts for empirical representations entirely in terms of the unconscious spontaneity of consciousness. Fichte was well acquainted with and profoundly impressed by Maimon's works, which had a significant influence on his own revision of transcendental idealism. Fichte frequently expressed his admiration for Maimon's achievement. For example, in his letter of March–April 1795 to K. L. Reinhold, he wrote: "My respect for Maimon's talent knows no bounds. I firmly believe that he has completely overturned the entire Kantian philosophy as it has been understood by everyone until now, including you, *and I am prepared to prove it*"

unifies the conflicting claims of the various dogmatic systems.* The author is not in the habit of speaking about things that he has not yet accomplished, and, in the present case, would either have carried out his
I.30 intentions or kept forever silent on the subject, were it not for the fact that the present occasion seems to demand that he render an account, both of how he has employed his leisure until now and of the work to which he intends to dedicate himself in the future.

The investigation which follows pretends to no more than hypothetical validity, though from this it by no means follows that the author is able to base his assertions only upon unprovable hypotheses, nor that they are not the results of a more profound and sound system. Admittedly, it will be years before I can promise to be able to lay this system before the public in a worthy form. Nevertheless, I still expect that people will be fair enough to postpone disputation until they have examined the whole system.

The primary object of this work is to permit students at the university to which I have been called to decide whether to entrust themselves to my guidance along that path which leads to the supreme science, and to allow them to judge whether they can entertain the hope that I can shed enough light on this path to enable them to follow it without stumbling dangerously. Its second object is to solicit the judgment of my patrons and friends regarding my undertaking.

The remarks which follow are intended for those readers who belong to neither of the above classes.

The author remains convinced that no human understanding can advance further than that boundary on which Kant, especially in the *Critique of Judgment,* stood, and which he declared to be the final boundary of finite knowing—but without ever telling us specifically where it lies. I realize that I will never be able to say anything which has not

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(translated in full below, Section X, no. 12). Fichte corresponded with Maimon for several years and sent him a copy of the first edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* The writings of Maimon that most influenced Fichte were *Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie* (1790); *Streiferein im Gebiete der Philosophie* (1793); *Die Kategorien der Aristotles* (1794); and *Versuch einer neuen Logik* (1794). In English, see the extract from Maimon's *Letters of Philaletes to Aenesidemus,* translated by di Giovanni, in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel,* pp. 159–99. See too, Samuel Atlas, *From Critical to Speculative Idealism: The Philosophy of Salomon Maimon* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964).

*The real controversy between criticism and dogmatism concerns *the connection between our knowledge and a thing in itself.* In this controversy the skeptics have correctly allied themselves with the dogmatists and with healthy common sense (which certainly deserves to be considered, not of course as a judge, but as a witness called to give testimony). Some future *Wissenschaftslehre* might well be able to settle this controversy by showing the following: that our knowledge is by no means connected directly through representation with things in themselves, but is connected with them only indirectly, through *feeling;* that in any case things are *represented* merely *as appearances,* whereas they are *felt as things in themselves;* that no representations at all would be possible without feeling; but that things in themselves can be recognized only *subjectively,* i.e., insofar as they affect our feeling.

already—directly or indirectly and with more or less clarity—been indicated by Kant. I leave to future ages the task of fathoming the genius of
I,31 this man who, often as if inspired from on high, drove philosophical judgment so decisively from the standpoint at which he found it toward its final goal. I am just as sincerely convinced that nothing, following Kant's spirit of genius, could contribute more to philosophy than Reinhold's[3] systematic spirit, and I believe that I recognize the honorable place which Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy will always be accorded, despite the further progress which philosophy must necessarily make under the guidance of whomever it may be. I have no malicious wish to undervalue or depreciate any service at all. I realize that every step which science has ever attained had first to be climbed before a higher one could be reached, and I really take no personal credit for the fortunate accident that I am called to work after excellent workmen have gone before me. Furthermore, I know that in science merit is based not on the luck of discovery, but rather on the integrity of the search—which is something in regard to which everyone can only judge and reward himself. This is not said for the benefit of those who are great men and those who would emulate them, but rather for the benefit of those other, not so great, men. It was not intended for anyone who finds it superfluous.

In addition to these serious people, there are also facetious ones who warn philosophers not to make themselves ridiculous by raising exaggerated exectations regarding their science. I have no wish to judge whether such persons are really laughing from their hearts, out of inborn joviality, or whether there may not be among them some who are simply forcing themselves to laugh, as a means of spoiling for unsophisticated inquirers an undertaking which they themselves—for comprehensible reasons—do not enjoy witnessing.* Since, to the best of my knowledge, I have not yet provided nourishment for the humor of these persons by raising such high expectations, then perhaps I may request them to hold their laughter for the present and to wait until this enterprise has formally miscarried or been abandoned—not for the sake
I,32 of philosophers and still less for that of philosophy, but for their own sake. They may then ridicule our faith in mankind (to which they themselves belong) and our hopes regarding mankind's great abilities. Then, whenever they require consolation, they may repeat their consoling maxim: "Mankind is beyond help. This is how it always has been and always will be."

[3]K. L. Reinhold (1758–1823) was the previous occupant of Fichte's chair at Jena. Concerning Reinhold's systematic revision of Kant, the so-called Elementary Philosophy, see the editor's preface to Fichte's *Aenesidemus* review, above, Section I.

**Malis rident alienis.*[4]

[4]"They smile at the misfortunes of others." Freely quoted from Horace, *Satires*, II: 3, 72.

Preface to the Second Edition

This little book was out of print, and I needed it in order to refer to it in my lectures. Furthermore, with the exception of some essays in the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten,*[5] it is the only work so far in which the manner of philosophizing in the *Wissenschaftslehre* is itself an object of philosophizing, and therefore it serves as an introduction to this system. For these reasons I have arranged for a new edition.

Despite its specific title and contents, even the intention and the nature of this treatise have been frequently misunderstood. Thus, on the occasion of this second edition, it is necessary to do what I thought quite unnecessary in the first edition: to clarify these points specifically in a preface.

One can philosophize about metaphysics itself (which does not have to be a theory of the so-called things in themselves, but may be a genetic deduction of what we find in our consciousness). One can embark on investigations into the possibility, the real meaning, and the rules governing such a science. And this is very advantageous for the cultivation of the science of metaphysics itself. The philosophical name for a system of this sort of inquiry is "critique." This, anyway, is all that ought to be called by that name. Critique itself is not metaphysics, but lies beyond
I,33 metaphysics. It is related to metaphysics in exactly the same way that metaphysics is related to the ordinary point of view of natural understanding. Metaphysics explains the ordinary point of view, and metaphysics is itself explained by critique. The object of genuine critique is philosophical thinking. If philosophy itself is also to be called "critical," this can only mean that it criticizes natural thinking. A pure critique is intermixed with no metaphysical investigations. The Kantian critique for example, which presents itself as a *critique,* is by no means pure, but is itself largely metaphysics. Sometimes it criticizes philosophical thinking, and sometimes it criticizes natural thinking—which, taken by itself, would be no cause for reproach, if only the distinction between the two kinds of critique had been clearly indicated, as well as the kind to which each individual investigation belonged. A pure metaphysics, as such, includes no additional critique beyond that critique with which one is supposed to have come to terms in advance. Accordingly, none of the previous versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* which present themselves as metaphysics, are pure metaphysics—nor could they have been, since this unaccustomed way of thinking could not have been expected to gain a hearing without the critical pointers which accompanied it.

[5]Viz., the first and second introductions to the *Wissenschaftslehre* (1797). In *SW,* I: 417–518; *AA* I, 4:183–269 (translated in *H/L,* pp. 3–85).

The nature of the following treatise is thus precisely indicated. It is a part of the critique of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but it is by no means the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself, nor is it a part of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

It is, I said, a part of this critique: specifically, it describes the relation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to ordinary knowledge and to those sciences which are possible from the standpoint of ordinary knowledge, and it describes this in terms of the content of knowledge. But there is another approach which contributes greatly toward forming a correct concept of our system, toward guarding against misunderstanding, and toward providing a means of entry into this system: namely, a consideration of the relation of transcendental thinking to ordinary thinking in terms of
I,34 its form, that is, a description of the point of view from which the transcendental philosopher views all knowledge and of his state of mind when he engages in speculation. The author believes that he has explained himself with some clarity on these points in his two "Introductions" to a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* (in the previously mentioned journal, 1797)—especially in the Second Introduction. A science and the critique of that science support and explain each other reciprocally. It will not become easy to render a systematic and complete account of the procedure of the *Wissenschaftslehre* until it is possible to provide a pure exposition of this science itself. Until such time as he himself or someone else can complete this job, the author asks the public's forgiveness for the preliminary and incomplete character of this work.

All that has been altered in this second edition are a few phrases and expressions which were not sufficiently precise. Some footnotes which embroiled the system in still avoidable polemical quarrels have been omitted—as has the entire third section ("Hypothetical Division of the *Wissenschaftslehre*"). This third section had from the beginning only a temporary purpose, and its contents have since received much clearer and more ample expression in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*[6]

Since I am reissuing the treatise in which I first announced my system, it is perhaps not improper to add some remarks concerning the history of the reception this system has received so far. Few persons adopted the reasonable measure of keeping temporarily silent and then reflecting a bit. Most betrayed their stupid astonishment at the new phenomenon and greeted it with idiotic laughter and tasteless ridicule. The more good-natured tried to excuse the author by treating the whole thing as nothing but a bad joke, while others, in all seriousness, speculated that the author might soon be committed "to certain charitable institutions."

[6]*Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794–95). In *SW,* I: 83–328; *AA* I, 2:249–451 (translated in *H/L,* pp. 89–286).

It would be a most instructive contribution to the history of the human spirit for someone to recount the reception received by various philo-
I,35 sophical propositions upon their first appearance. It is a genuine loss that we no longer possess the first astonished judgment of contemporaries concerning some of the old systems. But there is still time to assemble a collection of such first reviews of the Kantian system—including, at the head of the list, the one which appeared in the renowned Göttingen *Gelehrten-Zeitung*[7]—in order to preserve them as curiosities for future ages. I myself wish to undertake this task for the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and, as a first step, I am appending to this treatise two of the most remarkable hostile reviews of it.[8] Naturally, I append them without any additional comment. The philosophical public, which is now better acquainted with my system, requires no such comment, and for the authors of these reviews it is a sufficient misfortune to have said what they did.

Despite its terrible reception, this system nevertheless soon found a fate happier than that which has fallen to the lot of any other system. It has been adopted enthusiastically by several brilliant young thinkers, and, following long and mature examination, a celebrated veteran of philosophical literature has given it his approval.[9] From the united efforts of so many excellent minds it is to be expected that this system will soon be described from many different angles and that it will be widely applied and will achieve its aim of reforming philosophy and thereby affecting scientific practice as such. There are similarities between the first reception of this system and the reception of the different and immediately preceding presentation of the same system—or, as some experts believe, of the different, immediately preceding system.[10] (I have good reasons for claiming that my system is simply a different version of the preceding
I,36 one, but I hereby solemnly renounce any further dispute over this point.) But despite their similar receptions (though, as is to be expected from the Kantians, the reception given to the *Wissenschaftslehre* turned out to be

[7]The hostile review to which Fichte here refers was a review of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* which appeared in the January 19, 1782, issue of the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen,* a journal Fichte believed to be particularly hostile to his own writings as well.

[8]The two reviews (which are not included in this translation) are J. S. Beck's review of Fichte's *Ueber den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* and *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre,* which was published in February 1795 in the *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophischen Geist* and an anonymous review of F. W. J. Schelling's *Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt,* which appeared in the January 9, 1795, issue of the same journal. It is interesting to note that Fichte treats the review of Schelling's book as a review of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

[9]The "celebrated veteran of philosophical literature" to whom Fichte refers is K. L. Reinhold, whose (temporary) conversion to the standpoint of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* was made public in a long and laudatory review of Fichte's writings, published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in January 1798.

[10]I.e., Kant's system.

much more coarse and vulgar than the one given to Kant's writings), it is to be hoped that the two—systems or versions of the same system—will not share the same result: the generation of a swarm of slavish, brutal imitators. One would think that the sad, immediately preceding affair would deter the Germans from taking up the yoke of slavish imitation twice in such close succession. In addition, the form which has so far been selected for presenting this theory—a form which shuns the fixed letter—appears to have protected its inner spirit against such thoughtless imitators. Furthermore, it is not to be expected that the friends of the *Wissenschaftslehre* would eagerly welcome such homage.

This system is still indescribably far from completion. The foundation has scarcely been laid so far. The erection of the building has barely begun, and I wish all of my writings up to now to be considered merely as preliminary works. Previously I feared that, for better or for worse, I would have to bequeath my system to some future age which might be able to understand it, and that I would be forced to hand it down in the dead letters of that particular form in which it first presented itself to me. But now I can embrace the solid hope of gaining agreement and advice even from my own contemporaries—the hope of seeing my system assume a universal form through the shared labor of many persons and the hope of bequeathing it as something living within the spirit and the manner of thinking of my age. This hope has altered the plan which I had when I first announced my system. To be specific, I will for the present proceed no further with the systematic elaboration of this system; instead I will first try to elaborate more fully what has already been discovered and to make it completely clear and obvious to every impartial person. A first step in this direction has already been made in the previously mentioned journal, and I will proceed with this project to the extent that my more immediate academic duties permit. I have heard
I,37 from several sources that many persons have found these essays[11] illuminating, and if the public attitude toward the new theory has not been more generally altered, this might well be due to the fact that the journal in question seems not to have a very wide circulation. With the same aim in mind, just as soon as time permits, I intend to publish a new attempt at a purely and strictly systematic presentation of the foundations of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

Jena, Michaelmas, 1798

[11] I.e., the two previously mentioned "Introductions" which appeared in the *Philosophisches Journal* in 1797. These were intended as introductions to the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* to which Fichte later alludes. Only the first part of the announced "New Presentation" was ever published.

I,38

Part I
Concerning the General Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

§1. Hypothetical Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

The surest way to unite divided parties is by starting with something on which they agree.

Philosophy is *a science.* All descriptions of philosophy are as unanimous on this point as they differ regarding the *object* of this science. Now what if the source of this lack of unanimity were simply that the concept of science itself, which they all recognize philosophy to be, was not completely developed? And what if the determination of this single feature on which everyone agrees were sufficient to determine the concept of philosophy itself?

A science possesses systematic form. All the propositions of a science are joined together in a single first principle, in which they unite to form a whole. This is also generally admitted, but is this enough to exhaust the concept of science?

Suppose that someone were to base a system upon a groundless and indemonstrable proposition: the proposition, for example, that there are in the air creatures with human desires, passions, and concepts, but with ethereal bodies. And suppose further—something which in itself is entirely possible—that he were to erect upon this proposition an ever so systematic natural history of these ethereal spirits. Would we recognize
I,39 such a system to be a science, no matter how strictly inferences are made within it and no matter how closely its individual parts are linked to each other? On the other hand, when a person states a single theorem—a craftsman, perhaps, who asserts that when a pillar is erected at a right angle to a horizontal surface it stands perpendicular and that, no matter how far it is extended, it will never incline toward either side (which he may have first heard someone say and later discovered to be true in diverse experiences)—everyone will admit that he possesses scientific knowledge of what he asserts, even though he cannot systematically demonstrate his proposition from the principles of geometry.[12] Now

[12]Here, as elsewhere, the translation follows the text of the second edition. The text of this passage in the first edition includes the additional example of historical knowledge and reads as follows: "On the other hand, when a person states a single theorem or fact—a craftsman, perhaps, who asserts that the perpendicular to a horizontal line forms a right angle on both sides, or the uneducated farmer who says that the Jewish historian Josephus lived during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem—everyone will admit that these men possess scientific knowledge of what they assert, even though the former cannot systematically demonstrate his proposition from the first principles of geometry nor the latter provide a methodologically correct substantiation of the historical accuracy of his statement. Both have merely taken the matter on trust and faith." Throughout the discussion which follows, the first edition repeats the example of the farmer's historical knowledge every time the craftsman's geometrical knowledge is mentioned.

why do we refuse to call that sound system which rests upon an unproven and unprovable proposition a science? And why do we call "scientific" the knowledge of the second man, which, as he understands it, is connected with no system?

The reason is undoubtedly because the former system, despite its methodologically correct form, contains nothing which could be known; whereas the latter, which altogether lacks a methodologically correct form, asserts something which the man really *does know* and *can know.*

It appears to follow that the essence of science lies in the character of its content and in the relation of this content to the consciousness of the person said to "know" something.[13] Thus systematic form seems to be something merely incidental to science—not its aim, but merely the means to this aim.

We may provisionally consider the matter in the following way: Suppose that for some reason the human mind were able to know only very little with certainty, and that regarding everything else it could entertain only opinions, guesses, suspicions, and arbitrary assumptions. And suppose too, and again, for whatever reason, that it really could not rest content with knowledge which is either so limited or so uncertain. In this
I,40 case its sole means for expanding its knowledge and making it more certain would be by comparing what is uncertain with what is certain and then inferring the certainty or uncertainty of the former from its equivalence or inequivalence (if I may make provisional use of these terms until I have time to explain them) to the latter. If an uncertain proposition were the equivalent of one that is *certain,* then it could be safely assumed that it would be certain too. If the uncertain proposition were opposed by one that is certain, then we would know that the uncertain proposition would be false. The mind would thus be insured against being deceived any further by the false proposition. It would be freed from error, but it would not have gained truth.

I will make myself clearer. A science is supposed to be something unified and whole. For a person who lacks any systematic acquaintance with geometry, the proposition that a pillar erected at a right angle to a horizontal surface is perpendicular is without doubt a single whole, and to this extent it is scientific knowledge.

But we also consider geometry as a whole to be one science, though it contains many more propositions in addition to this one. Now how and by what means do a number of propositions, which in themselves differ greatly from each other, become *one* science, become one and the same whole?

[13]In the first edition, this sentence reads: "It follows that the essence of science lies in the character of its content, which—at least for the person who is supposed to be acquainted with the science—must be something certain."

This undoubtedly occurs because the individual propositions were not scientific propositions by themselves, but only became scientific in the context of the whole—through their position within and relation to the whole. But merely by connecting parts we can never produce anything which is not already present in one of the parts of the whole. So if among the propositions which were bound together there had not been one which was certain, then the whole which was produced by binding these propositions together would not be certain either.

Consequently, at least one proposition has got to be certain, and this proposition then, so to speak, communicates its certainty to the other
I,41 propositions: so that if and insofar as the first proposition is certain, then a second proposition is too; and if and insofar as this second one is certain, then a third one is, etc. In this manner several propositions, which are perhaps very different in themselves, would come to share one common certainty, and thus they would constitute only one science, since they would *all* have *the same* certainty.

We have just referred to a proposition (we have assumed that there is only one such) as purely and simply *certain.* Now this proposition cannot derive its certainty merely from its connection with the other propositions. On the contrary, since nothing can arise from the union of several parts which is present in none of those parts, this proposition must be certain previous to its association with the others. But all the other propositions must derive their certainty from this proposition. *It* has to be certain and established in advance of all connection with other propositions. None of the other propositions have to be certain in advance; they all become certain and are established for the first time through this association.

This also makes it obvious that the assumption we have been making is the only correct one and that in each science there can be only one proposition that is certain and established prior to the connection between the propositions. Were there several such propositions, then either they would have no connection at all with the other proposition that is certain and established prior to the connection, or else they would be connected to it. In the first case they would not then be part of the same whole, but would constitute one or more separate wholes. But the only way in which propositions are supposed to be connected to each other is by sharing a common certainty, so that if one is certain then another one must also be certain, and if one is uncertain then the other one must also be uncertain; and all that is supposed to determine the connection between the two propositions is the relation of the certainty of the one to the certainty of the other. But a proposition which possesses its own certainty independently of the other propositions could not be connected with them in this manner. If its certainty is independent then it remains certain even if the others are not. Consequently, such a proposi-

tion would not be connected via certainty with the other propositions at all. A proposition of this sort, one which is certain prior to and independently of the association with others, is termed a *first principle.*[14] Every science requires a first principle. In fact, if we consider the innermost
I,42 character of science, a science could well consist of only one proposition, a proposition which is certain in itself (though naturally it would not be called a "first principle" in this case, since nothing else would be based upon it). Furthermore, a science can have no more than one first principle, for if it had more than one it would be several sciences rather than one.

In addition to that proposition which is certain prior to the connection with others, a science may also contain other propositions, which are recognized as certain only because of their connection with the first principle and are recognized to be certain only in the same way and to the same degree that the first principle is recognized to be certain. As was previously indicated, this connection between propositions is established by showing that if proposition *A* is certain, then proposition *B* must also be certain, and that if proposition *B* is certain, then proposition *C* must also be, etc. Connection of this sort is called the "systematic form" of the whole (i.e., that whole which originates from the individual parts). What is the point of connecting propositions in this way? This is undoubtedly not done merely in order to demonstrate virtuosity in the art of connecting, but rather in order to confer certainty upon propositions which lack it. Systematic form is, consequently, not the aim of science, but is an incidental means toward the achievement of this aim, a means which can be employed only when a science consists of several propositions. Far from being the essence of science, systematic form is merely one of its incidental properties. Science may be imagined as a building whose main object is soundness. The foundation is sound, and thus once the foundation has been laid this main purpose would be accomplished. But one cannot live in a mere foundation, which by itself provides protection against neither the willful attack of the enemy nor the unwilled attacks of the weather; so one adds side walls and a roof above them. Every part of the building is attached to the foundation and to the other parts, and in this way the entire building becomes sound. But nobody constructs a sound building merely in order to have an opportunity to attach things to each other; one attaches things to each other in order to make the building sound, and the building is sound to the extent that all of its parts rest upon a sound foundation.

The foundation is sound. It itself is based not upon some additional
I,43 foundation, but rather upon the solid earth. Upon what then do we

[14]"ein Grundsatz."

propose to base the foundation of our scientific structure? The first principles of our systems should and must be certain in advance. Their certainty cannot be demonstrated within the systems themselves; on the contrary, every proof which is possible within these systems presupposes the certainty of these first principles. If *these first principles* are certain then of course everything that is derived from them is also certain: *but from what is their own certainty derived?*

After we have answered this question, will we not be faced with a new, quite distinct one? In the construction of our theoretical structures we wish to infer in the following manner: *if* the first principle is certain, then another specific proposition is certain too. What is the basis for this "then"? What is the basis for this necessary connection between a proposition and a first principle, thanks to which the one is supposed to turn out to be just as certain as the other? What are the conditions for this kind of connection, and how do we know *that* they are the conditions and that they are the *exclusive* and *sole* conditions? And how is it that we ever come to assume that there is a necessary connection between different propositions and that this connection is governed by a unique and exhaustive set of conditions?

In short, how can *the certainty of the first principle itself* be established? And what is *the warrant for that specific kind of inference by which we infer the certainty of other propositions from the certainty of the first principle?*

That aspect of the first principle which is to be communicated to all the other propositions within a science I term the *inner content* of the first principle and of the science as such. That manner in which this inner content is to be communicated from the first principle to the other propositions I term the *form* of the science. The question, therefore, is this: How are the form and content of a science possible at all, that is, how is science possible?

It would take a science to answer these questions: *the science of science as such.*

Prior to the inquiry we cannot say whether or not it will be possible to
I,44 answer this question, that is, we cannot determine in advance whether our knowledge in its totality has a recognizable and sound foundation, or whether (at least *for us*) it rests upon nothing at all, no matter how closely its individual parts are linked together. But if it turns out that our knowledge does have a foundation for us, then this question must be answerable, and there must be a science within which it is answered. And if there is such a science, then our knowledge has a recognizable foundation. Consequently, in advance of the inquiry we can say nothing about whether our knowledge is well founded or is groundless. The possibility of the required science can be demonstrated only by its actuality.

It is arbitrary what name we give to such a (still merely problematic)

science. But suppose that it could be shown that, in the wake of all previous experience, the field which remains available for scientific cultivation is already occupied by the appropriate sciences and that there appears to be only one uncultivated plot remaining, namely, the one marked out for the science of science as such. And suppose, furthermore, that under a familiar name ("philosophy") one discovers the idea of a science, that is, the idea of something which wishes to be or to become a science, but which cannot decide where it should take root. In this case it would not be improper to direct it toward the empty plot we have discovered. It is immaterial whether or not people have always meant precisely this by the word "philosophy." Afterward, this science (if philosophy ever becomes a science) will be justified in casting off a few names which it has previously assumed out of (a by no means exaggerated) modesty: the names "esoteric amusement," "hobby," and "dilettantism."[15] The nation which discovered this science would deserve to give it a name in its own language,* in which case it could be called
I,45 simply "science," or "Theory of Scientific Knowledge" [that is, *Wissenschaftslehre*]. And accordingly, what has previously been called "philosophy" would be "the science of science as such."

[15]"den Namen einer Kennerei, einer Liebhaberei, eines Dilettantism."

*This nation would also deserve to coin in its language the other technical expressions to be employed in the science. Thereby this language itself, as well as the nation which speaks it, would gain a decisive superiority over all other languages and nations.

[Additional remark in the second edition:]

Given an arbitrarily chosen fundamental term (for every language must begin with something arbitrary), there is even a system of philosophical terminology which, in respect to all of its derived parts, is necessary and must be proven to be so by proceeding in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the laws governing the metaphorical designation of transcendental concepts. Philosophy, which in respect to its concept is something valid for all reason, would consequently become something quite national in respect of its terminology—something selected from the inmost character of the nation that speaks the language in question and, in turn, something which perfects the national language by making it as specific as possible. However, this systematic-national terminology cannot be instituted in advance of the completion of the system of reason itself, both in its entire scope and in the total development of all of its parts. Terminological specification is the last task for philosophical judgment, a task which, taken in its entire scope, may easily be too great for a single human lifetime.

This explains why the author has not yet accomplished what he seems to have promised in the above remark, but has instead made use of whatever technical terms he found available, whether from German, Latin, or Greek. For the author all terminology is merely provisional, until such time as it can be established in a universal and permanently valid manner (whether this task be allotted to the author himself or to someone else). For the same reason I have devoted little attention to terminology as such and have avoided fixed definitions. And for the same reason I have not made any personal use of some apt remarks which others have made concerning this point (e.g., a proposed distinction between "dogmatism" and "dogmaticism"), since such remarks are only relevant to the present state of science. I will continue to make use of circumlocution and multiplicity of expression in order to give my presentations the clarity and specificity necessary to fulfill my intentions in each particular instance.

§2. Development of the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

One should not infer anything from definitions. This means either that one should not, without any additional reason, infer that because one is able without any contradiction to conceive that a thing which exists
I,46 quite independently of our description of it has a certain property, that this property has to be encountered in the real thing. Or else it means that in the case of a thing which is supposed to be first produced by us, according to our concept of its purpose, we should not conclude that just because we can conceive of this purpose, it can therefore really be achieved. But this maxim certainly does not mean that one should not have a purpose in one's mental or physical labors, or that one should not attempt to make this purpose plain, even before setting to work, but should rather leave the results of his labor up to the play of his imagination or of his fingers. The inventor of the aerostatic spheres[16] could certainly calculate their size and the relation of the air within them to the atmosphere and thus the speed with which his machine would move, even before he knew whether he would discover a gas which could make his machine sufficiently lighter than the atmosphere. And Archimedes could design that machine with which he wished to move the earth from its position, even though he was certain that he could discover no place outside the earth's gravitational field from which he could operate his machine. So too with the science which we have just described: it is not something which exists independently of us and without our help. On the contrary, it is something which can only be produced by the freedom of our mind, turned in a particular direction—supposing that such mental freedom does exist, which is also something that we cannot yet know. Let us specify in advance this direction [in which we must turn our minds in order to construct a *Wissenschaftslehre*], and let us obtain for ourselves a clear concept of *what* our task is to be. The question of whether or not we can actually produce the science in question will be decided by whether or not we actually do produce it. The issue at present, however, is not this, but instead concerns what it is that we actually want to produce. And this is determined by our definition.

(1) The science we have described is supposed to be, above all, a
I,47 science *of science as such.* Every possible science has *one first principle,* which cannot be demonstrated within that science itself, but must be certain in advance of the science. But where is this first principle supposed to be proven? The answer is undoubtedly: in that science which has to establish the basis of all possible sciences. In this regard the *Wissenschaftslehre* has to do two things. First of all, it has to establish the pos-

[16]Jacques Etienne Montgolfier (1745–1799), who, with his brother Joseph, invented the hot-air balloon in 1783.

sibility of any first principles whatsoever—to show how, to what extent, under what conditions, and perhaps to what degree anything at all can be certain, as well as what the phrase "to be certain" means. Second, it has the special task of demonstrating the first principles of all the sciences which are possible—something which cannot be done within these sciences themselves.

Every science which consists not of one single, isolated proposition, but rather of several propositions which together constitute a whole, possesses *systematic form.* This form is the condition which governs the connection between the derived propositions and the first principle. It provides the justification for inferring from this connection that the derived propositions are necessarily just as certain as the first principle. So long as the special sciences retain their unity and do not concern themselves with matters which do not pertain to them, this systematic form can no more be demonstrated within these special sciences than can the truth of their first principles. On the contrary, the possibility of their form is already presupposed. Consequently, a universal *Wissenschaftslehre* has the responsibility for establishing the systematic form for all possible sciences.

(2) The *Wissenschaftslehre* is itself *a science.* Thus it too must begin with *one first principle*—a first principle that cannot be proven within the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but has to be presupposed for this to be possible as a science. But neither can this first principle be proven within any higher science. For in that case this higher science would itself be the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and the science whose first principle first had to be demonstrated would not be the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Consequently, this first principle—the first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and through it the first principle of all science and knowledge—simply cannot be proven. That
I,48 is to say, it cannot be traced back to any higher principle, in relation to which its own certainty would become evident. Yet this first principle is supposed to provide the foundation for all certainty. It therefore must surely be certain: certain in itself, through itself, and for its own sake. All other propositions will be certain because they can be shown to be in some respect equivalent to this first principle. But this principle has to be certain merely because it is equivalent to itself. All other propositions will possess only an indirect certainty derived from the first principle; the first principle has to be immediately certain. All knowledge is based upon this principle, and apart from it no knowledge at all would be possible. It itself, however, is based upon no other knowledge; it is the principle of knowledge as such. It is absolutely certain; that is, it is certain *because* it is certain.[17] It provides the foundation for all certainty;

[17]The editor of *SW* prints the following note to this passage and identifies it as Fichte's own marginal comment: "One cannot without contradiction ask about the basis for the certainty of this first principle."

that is, everything that is certain is so because *it* is certain, and if *it* is not certain, then nothing is. It provides the foundation for all knowledge; that is, if one has any knowledge at all then one knows what this principle asserts. One knows it immediately as soon as one knows anything at all. It accompanies all knowledge. It is contained within all knowledge. It is presupposed by all knowledge.

Insofar as the *Wissenschaftslehre* is itself a science, and one which is to consist of several propositions and not merely of its mere first principle (from the fact that this theory has to establish the first principles of all the other sciences it follows that it must consist of several propositions), then it must possess *systematic form.* But it can derive neither the *specific character* nor the *validity* of this form from any other science, for the *Wissenschaftslehre* has to establish not just the principles (and thus the inner content) of all other sciences, but also their form (and thus the possibility of the
I,49 connection between various propositions within these sciences). Consequently, the *Wissenschaftslehre* has to contain this form within itself and has to establish it through itself.

We only have to analyze this a bit in order to see what it actually says. Let us provisionally call that about which one knows something the "content" of a proposition and that which one knows about this something the "form" of a proposition. (In the proposition "Gold is a body," what one knows about are gold and body, and what one knows about them is that they are in a certain respect equivalent, and to that extent they may be substituted for each other. It is an affirmative proposition. This relationship constitutes its form.)

No proposition is possible without both content and form. There must be something about which one has knowledge, and there must also be something which one knows about this thing. It follows that the initial proposition of the entire *Wissenschaftslehre* must have both content and form. Since this proposition is supposed to be certain immediately and through itself, this can only mean that its content determines its form and its form determines its content. This particular form can fit only this particular content, and this content can fit only this form. Any other form for this content or any other content for this form would invalidate the proposition itself and, with it, all knowledge. The form of the absolute first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is, therefore, not only furnished by this principle itself, it is also put forward as absolutely valid for the content of this proposition. Should the *Wissenschaftslehre* turn out to have other first principles in addition to this absolute first one, these others can be only partially absolute; they must, however, be partially conditioned by this first and supreme principle[18]—for otherwise there would not be one single first principle. Consequently, the "absolute first"

[18]"Because in the first case they would not be first principles at all, but would instead be derived principles; and because in the second case, etc." (Fichte's marginal note).

element in any such additional principle would have to be either its content or its form, and the conditioned element, similarly, would have to be either its form or its content. Supposing the unconditioned ele-
I,50 ment to be the *content,* then the *form* of this content would be conditioned by the absolute first principle. Accordingly, the form of this content would be determined within the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself, through it and through its first principle. Or supposing the reverse—that is, that the *form* is the unconditioned element—in that case the *content* of this form would necessarily be determined by the first principle, and thus, indirectly, its form would be determined as well, insofar as it is supposed to be the form of a certain content. Thus, in this latter case as well, the form would be determined by the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and indeed, by its first principle. But if an absolute first principle, a *Wissenschaftslehre,* and a system of human knowledge as such are to exist, then there cannot be any first principle which is determined in neither form nor content by the absolute first principle. Consequently, there can be no more than three first principles: one which is determined, in respect to its form as well as to its content, absolutely and simply by itself; one which is self-determined in respect to its form; and one which is self-determined in respect to its content.

If the *Wissenschaftslehre* contains still other propositions, these must all be determined, in respect both to their form and to their content, by the first principle. Consequently, a *Wissenschaftslehre* must determine the form of all of its propositions, insofar as these are considered separately. But this kind of determination of the individual propositions is possible only insofar as these propositions mutually determine one another. But every proposition has to be *completely* determined, that is, its form must fit only its content and no other content, and this content must fit only this form in which it is found and no other form. Otherwise, the proposition in question would not be equivalent in its certainty to the first principle (one will recall what was said on this subject above), and thus the proposition would not be certain. Now if all the propositions of a *Wissenschaftslehre* are to be different (which they must be, since otherwise they would not be several different propositions, but would instead be repeated instances of one and the same proposition), then no proposition can be completely determined except insofar as it is determined as
I,51 one proposition among many. In this manner the entire series of propositions is completely determined, and none of them can occur at a different position within the series than the position it occupies. The position of every proposition in the *Wissenschaftslehre* is determined by another specific proposition and itself determines the position of a specific third one. Thus the *Wissenschaftslehre* determines its own form through itself and in its entirety.

The form of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is necessarily valid for its content.

For if the absolute first principle was immediately certain (i.e., if its form suited only its content and its content suited only its form), and if all possible additional propositions are determined directly or indirectly, in respect to their form or to their content, by this absolute first principle (if, as it were, these additional propositions are already contained in the absolute first principle), then what is true of the first principle must be true of the others as well: their form must suit only their content and their content must suit only their form. This holds true of the individual propositions. The form of the whole, however, is nothing more than the form of the individual propositions considered as one. What holds for each individual proposition must also hold for them all considered as one.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* is, however, supposed to furnish not only *its own* form, but the form of *all possible additional sciences* as well, and it is supposed to guarantee the validity of this form for all sciences. But this is conceivable only if every proposition in the other sciences is already contained in some proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and is thus already present in its own proper form within the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This provides us with an easy path back to the content of the absolute first principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* concerning which we can now say more than we were previously able.

Suppose that "to know with certainty" means nothing else but to have an insight into the inseparability of a particular content and a particular form (which is meant as no more than a nominal definition, since a real definition of knowledge is quite impossible). Then, from the way in
I,52 which the absolute first principle of all knowledge determines its form simply through its content and its content simply through its form, we can already, to some extent, see how the form of the entire content of knowledge might be determined—if, that is, the first principle includes all possible content. Accordingly, if our presupposition is correct and if there is one absolute first principle of all knowledge, then it follows that the content of this first principle must contain all possible content and must itself be contained in the content of no other proposition. Such content would be content pure and simple, absolute content.

It is easy to see that when we presuppose that such a *Wissenschaftslehre* is possible at all and when, in particular, we presuppose the possibility of its first principle, we are always already presupposing that there really is a system in human knowledge. If there is such a system, then it can also be shown (independently of our description of the *Wissenschaftslehre*) that there must be such an absolute first principle.

If there is no such system then only two possibilities are conceivable. The first is that there is nothing at all which is immediately certain, and our knowledge consists of one or more infinite chains in which every proposition is based upon another, higher proposition, and this higher

one, in turn, is based upon a still higher one. We build our dwelling upon the earth. The earth rests upon an elephant. The elephant stands upon a tortoise. The tortoise? Who knows what it is standing on? And so on, ad infinitum. If this is the actual state of our knowledge, then of course we cannot change this fact. It would follow as well that we possess no sound knowledge. Perhaps we have traced the chain of propositions back to a particular one and have found everything to be sound so far. But who can guarantee that if we were to dig a bit deeper we would not discover that our knowledge has no foundation and thus has to be abandoned? Our certainty would only be something begged and borrowed, and we could never be sure that it would remain certain tomorrow.

In the second case our knowledge could consist of several finite series,
I,53 each ending in a first principle based only upon itself. But then there would be several such first principles completely isolated from and unconnected with each other, since each establishes itself entirely independently of the others. There might, for example, be within us several innate truths, each of which is equally innate. But we could expect no further insight into the connection between these innate truths, since the connection lies beyond the individual truths. Or, to take another example, perhaps things outside of us contain a variety of simple elements which are communicated to us by the impression made upon us by the things. We, however, would not be able to penetrate to the connection between these simple elements, since nothing can be more simple than the simplest elements discovered in the impression. If this is the actual state of our knowledge, if human knowledge in itself is essentially such a piecework (as the actual knowledge of many men is), if our minds originally contain several threads which have no point of connection and which cannot be so connected, then once again we are in no position to struggle against our own nature. Our knowledge, so far as it extends, would indeed be certain, but it would not be a *unified* knowledge. Instead, it would constitute *many* sciences. In this case our dwelling would certainly be sound, but it would not be a unified, coherent structure. It would, instead, be a conglomeration of separate chambers, and we would be unable to pass from one to the other. It would be a building in which we would always be lost and would never feel at home. It would contain no light, and we would remain poor despite all of our wealth, because we could never estimate our fortune, never consider it as a whole, and never know what we actually possess. We could never employ one portion of our possessions to improve the others, because no portion would bear any relation to any other portion. Moreover, our knowledge would never be complete. Every day we would have to expect that a new innate truth might express itself within us, or that experience might present us with a new simple element. We would always have to be ready to pitch a new hut somewhere. In this second case no universal science
I,54 would be needed in order to provide the foundation for the other sci-

ences. Each science would establish its own foundation, and there would be just as many sciences as there are separate, immediately certain first principles.

If, however, instead of one or more system fragments (the first possibility) or several different systems (the second possibility), the human mind is supposed to contain one complete and unified system, then there has to be one such supreme and absolute first principle. Though our knowledge may radiate from this first principle in ever so many lines, from each of which branch out still more lines, they must still all cohere in one single ring, which is itself attached to nothing, but supports itself along with the entire system of knowledge through its own power. We have here a planet which supports itself through its own gravity and which irresistably attracts to its center all that we build—so long as we actually erect our structures on its surface and not, as it were, hanging in the air, and so long as we build perpendicularly and not, as it were, aslant. Not even a speck of dust can be removed from the gravitational field of this planet.

We cannot decide in advance of the inquiry whether or not there is any such system or any such first principle (which is the condition for the possibility of such a system). Not only is the first principle a proposition which is, as such, incapable of proof, it also cannot be demonstrated that it is the first principle of all knowledge. Everything depends on the experiment. Should we discover a proposition possessing all of the internal conditions necessary for the first principle of all human knowledge, we will then inquire whether it also possesses the external ones, namely whether we can trace back to it everything that we know or believe that we know. If we succeed in this, then we will have shown—by actually constructing it—that such a science is possible and that there is a system of human knowledge which it portrays. If we fail to construct such a science, then either there is no such system at all or else we have just not discovered it and must leave this discovery to our more fortunate successors. Simply to assert that such a system does not exist because *we* have failed to discover it is a presumption whose refutation does not deserve serious consideration.

I,55

Part II
Explication of the Concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

§3

To explicate a concept scientifically (and it is clear that we are speaking here only of this highest type of explication) is to assign it a place in the overall system of the human sciences, that is, to show which concept

determines its place and which other concept has its place determined by it. Yet the concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as such is itself the locus of all scientific concepts and assigns them all to their places within and through itself. Clearly, we are here speaking only of a hypothetical explication. That is to say, the question is the following one: Assuming that there are already sciences and that these sciences contain some truth (which is something which one can by no means know prior to the general *Wissenschaftslehre*), what then is the relationship between that *Wissenschaftslehre* which is supposed to be established and these other sciences?

The answer to this question too is contained in the mere concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre:* these sciences are related to the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the same way in which something established is related to the foundation upon which it is established. The various sciences do not assign a place to the *Wissenschaftslehre;* it assigns them to their places within[19] and through itself. Thus, all we have to do here is to develop this answer further.

(1) The *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to be the science of all the sciences. Thus arises, to begin with, the question: How can the *Wissenschaftslehre* guarantee to provide the foundation, not merely for all the sciences which have been established so far and with which we are already familiar, but for all the sciences which are possible? How can it guarantee to exhaust completely the realm of knowledge?[20]

I,56

(2) In this respect the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to provide all the sciences with their first principles. It follows that all those propositions which serve as first principles of the various particular sciences are, at the same time, propositions indigenous to the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Thus one and the same proposition has to be considered from two points of view: as a proposition contained within the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and also as a first principle standing at the pinnacle of some particular science. In the *Wissenschaftslehre,* inferences are drawn from this proposition insofar as it is considered as a proposition contained within the *Wissenschaftslehre.* In the particular sciences inferences are also drawn from the same proposition, considered this time as the first principle of the science in question. Now either the same inference is drawn from this proposition in both the *Wissenschaftslehre* and in the particular science, or else different inferences are drawn in each. In the first case, the *Wissenschaftslehre* would include not only the first principles but also all of the derived propositions of the particular sciences, in which case they would not be particular sciences at all, but merely parts of one and the same *Wissenschaftslehre.* The second case is likewise impossible, since the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to supply all the sciences with their form. The alternative is that something

[19]"—Not really within the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but nevertheless within the system of knowledge which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to portray" (Fichte's marginal note).

[20]"This against Aenesidemus" (Fichte's marginal note).

else (which admittedly can be derived from nowhere else but the *Wissenschaftslehre*) must be added to a mere proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* when this proposition becomes the first principle of a particular science. Thus the question arises: What is this "something else" which is added? Or. since this "something else" constitutes the difference in question, where is the precise boundary between the *Wissenschaftslehre* and every particular science?

(3) Furthermore, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to determine in the same respect the form of all the sciences. We have already shown how this might be done. We are, however, faced with another science called "logic" which makes the same claim. The *Wissenschaftslehre* has to be distinguished from logic; we must examine the relationship between them.

(4) The *Wissenschaftslehre* is itself a science, and we have already spec-
I,57 ified what it has to accomplish qua science. Yet insofar as it is simply a science, a type of knowledge (in the formal sense), it is a science of *something*. It has an object, and it is clear from what has already been said that this object can be nothing else but the system of human knowledge as such.[21] The question then arises: What is the relationship between this science, qua science, and its object as such?

§4. To What Extent Can the *Wissenschaftslehre* Be Sure That It Has Exhausted Human Knowledge as Such?

Human knowledge in its entirety is not the same as what has truly been known or has been imagined to have been known *so far*. Suppose that a philosopher had really mastered the latter and was able to prove by a complete induction that his system includes all that is known so far. He would nevertheless still be a long way from having accomplished the task of philosophy as such. For how would he demonstrate by induction from previous experience that there could be no future discovery which would not fit into his system? It would be no better for him to excuse himself by saying, for example, that he only intended to exhaust that knowledge which is possible in the present sphere of human existence. For were it the case that his philosophy were valid only for this sphere, then he would be acquainted with no other possible sphere. Therefore he could not be acquainted with the limits of that sphere which his philosophy is supposed to exhaust. He has arbitrarily drawn a boundary whose validity he can scarcely demonstrate except by appealing to past

[21] "Since this science asks (1) How is science possible at all? and (2) claims to have exhausted human knowledge, which is supposed to be based upon a single first principle" (Fichte's marginal note).

experience, which may always be contradicted by future experience, even experience within the same purported sphere of human existence. In order to discuss human knowledge in its entirety in an exhaustive manner one has to determine unconditionally and absolutely, not only
I,58 what man is capable of knowing at his present level of existence, but what he is capable of knowing at any possible and conceivable level of his existence.*

Such an exhaustive determination of human knowledge is possible only if it can be shown, first, that the proposed first principle is exhausted, and, second, that no other first principles except the one proposed are possible.

A first principle has been exhausted when a complete system has been erected upon it, that is, when the principle in question necessarily leads to *all* of the propositions which are asserted and when *all* of these propositions necessarily lead us back to the first principle. The negative proof that our system includes no *superfluous* propositions is that no proposition occurs anywhere in the system which could be true if the first principle were false—or could be false if the first principle were true. This is the negative proof, because a proposition not belonging to the system could be true even if the first principle of the system were false, or false even if it were true. If the first principle is given, then *all* of the propositions must be given as well; each individual[25] proposition is given in and through the first principle. From what has already been said
I,59 about the interconnection of the individual propositions of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* it is clear that this science would immediately include, and indeed would itself constitute, the negative proof in question. This will

*Reply to a possible objection:[22] The actual tasks of the human mind are certainly infinite, both in their number and their scope. They could be accomplished only by a completed approximation to infinity—something which in itself is impossible. But they are infinite only because they are immediately given *as* infinite tasks. There are infinitely many radii in an infinite circle whose center is given, but when the center is given, so too is the whole infinite circle with its infinite number of radii. Of course one end of each radius lies at infinity, but its other end lies in that center which every radius has in common. The center is given and so is the direction of the radii (for they are supposed to be straight lines). Thus all of the radii are given. (Among this infinite number of radii, which ones are actually to be drawn is something which is *determined* by the gradual development of our original limitation.[23] But these radii are not thereby *given* along with the center of the circle.) Human knowledge is infinite in *scope,* but its *nature* is totally determined through its own laws and can be exhaustively described.[24]

[22]In the first edition, the title of this remark reads: "Reply to a possible objection, though one which could only be made by a 'Popular Philosopher.'" For a brief account of the antispeculative "popular philosophy" movement in late eighteenth-century Germany, see Beck, *Early German Philosophy,* pp. 319–24. (The text of this "reply" is here translated from the second edition, which differs in minor respects from the first.)

[23]"Is something which is *determined* by the influence of the Not-I" (first edition).

[24]"The tasks confront us and are to be exhaustively enumerated. But they are not completed and cannot be completed" (Fichte's marginal note).

[25]"Particular" (Fichte's marginal note).

demonstrate that the science as such is *systematic,* that all of its parts are connected in one single first principle. Furthermore, the science is a *system* (or is complete) when no additional propositions can be deduced from the first principle. This furnishes the positive proof that the system does not include fewer[26] propositions than it should. The only question then is the following: When and under what conditions can an additional proposition be deduced? For clearly nothing is proven by the merely relative and negative criterion that *I* cannot see how anything further can be deduced from the first principle. There might well come after me another person able to see something where I can see nothing. We require a positive criterion in order to be able to demonstrate absolutely and unconditionally that nothing more can be deduced. This criterion can only be this: that the very principle from which we began is at the same time our final result. It would then be clear that we could go no further without retracing the path we have already taken. In some future exposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* it will be shown that this theory really does complete this circuit, that it leaves the inquirer at precisely the point where he started, and thus that the *Wissenschaftslehre* also includes within and through itself the second, positive proof.*

Yet even if the proposed first principle is exhausted, and a complete system is erected upon it, it still does not by any means follow that the
I,60 exhaustion of this principle involves the exhaustion of human knowledge as such. It is true that nothing can be added or subtracted from *this* completed system, but what is there to prevent wider future experience from adding to human consciousness propositions which are not based upon that first principle and which, therefore, presuppose one or more additional first principles (even if no traces of such new propositions should be presently observable)? In short, why should not one or more systems in addition to this one which has been completed be able to exist in the human mind? Admittedly, these systems would not have the least connection with each other or have the smallest point in common with each other or with that first system, but then they are not supposed to if they are to constitute several systems rather than one. In order, therefore, to prove satisfactorily that such new discoveries are impossible, it must be shown *that* there can be only one system within human knowledge. But since the proposition that all human knowledge constitutes but one, single, internally consistent [system of] knowledge must itself be

[26]"Does not include more" (first edition).

*Consequently the *Wissenschaftslehre* has absolute totality. Within it, each thing leads to everything and everything leads to each thing. However, it is the only science which can be completed. Completeness is thus its distinguishing feature. All other sciences are infinite and can never be completed, for they do not complete the circle and return to their first principles. The *Wissenschaftslehre* has to demonstrate that this is the case and show why it is so.

part of human knowledge, it can only be based upon that proposition which has been proposed as the first principle of all human knowledge and can be demonstrated only on the basis of this first principle. For the present, we would at least have established the following: namely, if, at some future time we were to become conscious of another first principle, this new first principle could not simply be *another* one, *distinct* from the one proposed; it would have to come into *formal* contradiction with the previous first principle.[27] The reason for this is as follows: It was presupposed above that the proposed first principle includes the proposition "there is a single system in human knowledge." Thus every proposition which we suppose not to be included in this unified system would not merely differ from the system,[28] but its mere existence would con-
I,61 tradict the system, since this system is supposed to be the only one possible. The supposed additional first principle would contradict the proposition derived [from the previously proposed first principle], which asserts the unity of the system. And since *all* of the propositions in this system are inseparably connected to each other (i.e., if any one of them is true, then they are necessarily all true, and if any one of them is false, then they are necessarily all false), the new principle would contradict every single proposition of that system—specifically, it would contradict the first principle of that system. If we presuppose in addition that this proposition alien to our system should itself have a systematic basis in consciousness in the manner described above, then it follows merely from the formal contradiction which its existence represents that the system to which this alien proposition is said to belong would also materially contradict the entire previous system and would thus have to be based upon a principle directly opposed to that of the first system. Thus, for example, if the first principle of the first system were the proposition "I am I," that of the second would have to be "I am not I."

We neither can nor should directly conclude from this contradiction that such an additional principle is impossible. If the previous first principle includes within itself the proposition "there is a single system of human knowledge," then, of course, it also includes within itself the proposition "nothing must stand in contradiction to this single system." But both of these propositions are only deduced from this first principle itself. Thus, when we assume that everything which follows from this principle is absolutely valid, then we are already assuming that the prin-

[27]"It must be the exact *opposite* [of the previous first principle]" (first edition).

[28]From this point to the end of the paragraph the first edition reads: "but would be opposed to it, since that system is supposed to be the only system, and would have to be based upon a first principle which contains the proposition, 'human knowledge is *not* a single system.' If one continued to infer back, one would have to encounter a first principle squarely opposed to the previously proposed first principle. If, for example, the first one was 'I am I' then the other one would have to be 'I am not-I.'"

ciple in question is the absolute and sole first principle and that it governs human knowledge completely. There is thus a circle here from which the human mind can never escape. It is good to concede its presence explicitly, in order to avoid being confused later by its unexpected discovery. The circle is as follows: If proposition *X* is the first, highest, and absolute first principle of human knowledge, then human knowledge constitutes one single system, for this conclusion follows from *X*. However, since human knowledge is supposed to constitute a single system, it follows that proposition *X*, which (according to the proposed science) is actually the foundation of a system, is the first principle of
I,62 human knowledge as such and that the system established upon *X* is that single system of human knowledge.

Now no one has any cause to be embarrassed by the existence of this circle. To desire the abolition of this circle is to desire that human knowledge be totally without any foundation. It is to desire that nothing should be absolutely certain and that all human knowledge should instead be only conditional, that no proposition should be valid in itself, but rather that every proposition should be so only on the condition that the proposition from which it follows is valid. In a word, it is to claim that there is no immediate truth at all, but only mediated truth—but *without anything to mediate it.*[29] Whoever so wishes can always ask himself what he would know if his I were not an I, that is, if he did not exist, and if he could not distinguish something not-I from his I.

§5. What Is the Boundary Separating the Universal *Wissenschaftslehre* from the Particular Sciences Which Are Based on It?

We have already found (in §3) that one and the same proposition cannot be in the same respect both a proposition of the general *Wissenschaftslehre* and the first principle of a particular science. Something additional is required in the latter case. This "something else" can be derived only from the general *Wissenschaftslehre,* since this contains all possible human knowledge. Yet this additional something must not already be included in the same proposition which is to be elevated by the addition of this something else to the status of a first principle of some particular science. If this were the case, then this proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* would already be the first principle it is supposed to become, and there would be no boundary separating the particular sciences from the parts of the general *Wissenschaftslehre.* Consequently there must be some individual proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* which

[29]This sentence was added in the second edition.

is united with that proposition which is supposed to become a first principle [of a particular science]. The objection that we are dealing with here is not one which arises directly from the concept of the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself, but is instead one arising from the presupposition that there really are other sciences in addition to and separate from
I,63 the *Wissenschaftslehre*. It follows, similarly, that this objection can be answered only by means of a presupposition. It will, for the moment, suffice if we can merely indicate some possible way of drawing the boundary. We cannot nor should we demonstrate here that the boundary drawn is the true boundary—though it well might be.

Let us, accordingly, assume the following: that the *Wissenschaftslehre* includes all of those specific actions which the human mind is necessarily forced to perform—whether conditionally or unconditionally; that, at the same time, the *Wissenschaftslehre* proposes that the ultimate explanatory ground for these necessary actions is the mind's utterly free and uncoerced ability to determine itself to act at all; and therefore, that the *Wissenschaftslehre* provides for both a necessary and a non-necessary, or free, mode of acting. Thus the *Wissenschaftslehre* could determine what the actions of the human mind are insofar as it acts of necessity but not insofar as it acts freely. If it is further assumed that the free actions of the mind are also to be determined somehow, then this could not occur within the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself. Yet since we are here dealing with *determination,* it must occur within *science,* and thus must take place within the particular sciences. Now the object of these acts can only be that which has been furnished by the *Wissenschaftslehre* as something necessary (since nothing is present except what the *Wissenschaftslehre* has provided, and it provides nothing at all except what is necessary). It would therefore have to be the case that in the first principle of a particular science an action which has been permitted to remain free in the *Wissenschaftslehre* becomes determined. Thus the *Wissenschaftslehre* would furnish that first principle with its necessity and its freedom as such, whereas the particular science would provide this freedom with a specific determination. And thus we have discovered the sharp boundary we were seeking: as soon as an action which is in itself free has been given a specific direction, we have moved from the domain of the general
I,64 *Wissenschaftslehre* into that of some particular science. Let me use two examples to make myself clear.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* furnishes us with space as something necessary and with the point as absolute limit. But it grants to the imagination complete freedom to place this point wherever it likes. As soon as it has made specific use of this freedom, by, for example, moving the point toward the boundary of the unbounded space and thus generating a line,* then we no longer find ourselves within the domain of the *Wissen-*

*[Note to the first edition only.] A question for the mathematician: Is not the concept of straightness already included in the concept of a line? Is there any other sort of line except

schaftslehre, but instead within the territory of a particular science called "geometry." The first principle of geometry is the overall task of limiting space in accordance with a rule, or the task of spatial construction. In this manner geometry is sharply separated from the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

The *Wissenschaftslehre* furnishes us with nature[30] as something necessary—with nature as something which, both in its being and its specific determinations, has to be viewed as independent of us. It also furnishes (again, as something necessary) the laws according to which nature
I,65 should and must be observed.* But the power of judgment still retains its complete freedom to apply these laws or not to apply them at all. It also retains the freedom to select from the multiplicity of laws whichever law it chooses for application to whatever object it chooses from the multiplicity of objects. It is free, for example, to consider the human body as raw matter, as organized matter, or as animate matter. But as soon as the power of judgment has been given the task of observing a particular object according to a particular law,[31] in order to determine thereby whether and to what extent the object conforms or fails to conform to the law, then the power of judgment is no longer free, but is subject to a rule. And accordingly, we are no longer within the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but instead are within the area of another science called "natural science." The first principle of natural science is the overall task of comparing every object of experience to every law of nature in our

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a straight one? Is the so-called curved line anything other than a stringing together of infinitely many points which are infinitely close to each other? This conclusion seems to me to be vouched for by the fact that the curved line is originally the boundary line of infinite space. (An infinite number of infinite radii are drawn with the I as their center. Our limited imagination, however, must assign a terminal point to each of these radii. Considered as one, these terminal points constitute the original curved line.) This makes it clear *that* and *why* the task of measuring the circumference of a circle by a straight line is an infinite task, one which could only be accomplished if an approximation to infinity could be completed. At the same time it becomes clear why the straight line cannot be defined.

[30] "The *Wissenschaftslehre* furnishes us with a not-I which is absolutely independent from the laws of mere representations" (first edition).

[31] "E.g., determining whether animal life can be explained merely on the basis of what is inorganic, or whether crystallization might perhaps be the transition from chemical bonding to organized structure, or whether magnetic and electrical forces are essentially the same or different, etc." (Fichte's marginal note).

*[Note to the first edition only.] Strange as this may seem to many natural scientists, it will nevertheless be shown in due course that the following can be strictly demonstrated: viz., that the scientist has imposed upon nature all of those laws which he believes that he learns by observing nature, and that all of these laws—the most specific as well as the most general, [those governing] the construction of the smallest blade of grass as well as the movements of the heavenly bodies—must be derivable in advance of all observation from the first principle of all human knowledge. It is true that we cannot become *conscious* of any law of nature or of any law whatsoever unless some object is provided to which the law can be applied. It is true that not all objects necessarily have to conform to the law and that they do not all have to conform to it to the same extent. It is true that no single object does or can conform to the law totally and completely. But just for these reasons it is also true that we do not learn these laws of nature by observation, but rather that the laws provide the basis for all observation. They are not only laws governing a nature independent of us; they are also laws governing the manner in which we have to observe nature.

mind. Natural science consists entirely of experiments (and does not consist in a passive relationship to the unregulated effects of nature upon us). We undertake these experiments voluntarily, and nature may or may not correspond to them. In this manner, natural science is sufficiently distinguished from the *Wissenschaftslehre* as such.

Thus (though we note this only in passing) we can already see why only the *Wissenschaftslehre* will possess absolute totality and why all the
I,66 particular sciences will be infinite. The *Wissenschaftslehre* contains nothing but what is necessary. If what is necessary is so in every respect, then its quantity is also something necessary, that is, it is necessarily limited. All other sciences start with freedom—the freedom of our mind as well as the freedom of nature,[32] which is absolutely independent of us. If this is to be real freedom absolutely ungoverned by any law, then no sphere of activity can be prescribed for it, for such a prescription could only be made according to a law. Consequently, the spheres of activity of the particular sciences are infinite. Thus an exhaustive *Wissenschaftslehre* represents no threat to the human mind's infinite progress toward perfection. The *Wissenschaftslehre* does not negate this infinite progress; on the contrary, it provides it with a foundation which is totally secure and beyond all doubt. It assigns to the human mind a task which it cannot complete in all eternity.

§6. How Is the General *Wissenschaftslehre* Related to Logic in Particular?

The *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to establish the form for all possible sciences. According to a common opinion, which may contain some truth, logic does the same thing. How then are these two sciences related to each other, particularly in regard to this enterprise which they would both assume?

An easy path into this highly important inquiry is revealed as soon as we recall that logic is supposed to furnish nothing but mere form, whereas the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to supply content as well as form. In the *Wissenschaftslehre,* form is never separated from content nor is content ever separated from form. Both are united most intimately in every proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* But if the propositions of logic contain merely the form of possible sciences without their content, then these logical propositions are not at the same time propositions of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but are distinct from them. It follows that the
I,67 entire science of logic is neither the *Wissenschaftslehre* itself nor a portion of this theory. No matter how odd this may sound, given the current

[32] "Of the not-I," (first edition).

state of philosophy, logic is not a philosophical science at all. It is, instead, a separate science in its own right (which, however, should not detract in the least from its dignity).

If this is what logic is, then it must be possible to indicate a particular determination of freedom by means of which scientific activity crosses from the realm of the *Wissenschaftslehre* into that of logic—a move which establishes the boundary between the two sciences. It is easy to point out this specific determination of freedom. In the *Wissenschaftslehre,* content and form are necessarily united. Logic is supposed to establish mere form separated from content. Since form and content are not originally separated, this act of separation can only occur through freedom. Consequently, logic would come into being through this free separation of mere form from content. The name for such an act of separation is "abstraction," and thus the essence of logic consists in abstraction from the entire content of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

It would follow from this that the propositions of logic would have nothing but form. But this is impossible since, according to the concept of a proposition as such, a proposition must have content as well as form (see §1). Thus the content of logic must be that which was merely form in the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This content again receives the universal form of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* though this form is here specified to be the form of a logical proposition. This second free act, the act through which form[33] becomes its own content and turns back upon itself, is called "reflection."[34] No abstraction is possible without reflection, and no reflection is possible without abstraction. Each, considered separately from the other and in itself, is an act of freedom. If, thus separated, they are related to
I,68 each other, then each is the necessary condition for the other. For synthetic thinking, however, they constitute only one and the same action, looked at from two sides.[35]

The special relationship between logic and the *Wissenschaftslehre* follows from the above. The former does not *provide the foundation* for the latter; it is, instead, the latter which provides the foundation for the former. The *Wissenschaftslehre* simply cannot be deduced from logic. Prior to the *Wissenschaftslehre,* one may not presuppose the validity of a single proposition of logic—including the law of contradiction. On the contrary, every logical proposition and logic in its entirety must be deduced from the *Wissenschaftslehre.* We have to show that the forms which are established within logic really are the forms of a particular content

[33]"As such" (Fichte's marginal note).

[34]"This second free act, by means of which form becomes the form of form itself, as its content, is called *reflection*" (first edition).

[35]"[. . .] possible without abstraction. Considered in themselves, both are acts of freedom. However, when they are reciprocally related to each other, then each is the necessary condition of the other" (first edition).

within the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Logic, therefore, derives its validity from the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but the validity of the latter is not derived from the former.

Neither is the *Wissenschaftslehre conditioned* and *determined* by logic. The opposite is the case. The *Wissenschaftslehre* does not, for example, obtain its form from logic. It possesses its form within itself and only establishes this form for a possible free act of abstraction. It is the *Wissenschaftslehre* which is the condition for the validity and applicability of logical propositions. The forms established by logic may not, in the ordinary business of thinking and in the particular sciences, be applied to any content other than that content which they already contain within themselves in the *Wissenschaftslehre.* They do not have to be applied to the entire content which they contain within the *Wissenschaftslehre,* for then no particular science would arise, and we would have instead only repetitions of portions of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Nevertheless the logical forms must necessarily be applied to a portion of the content of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* to a content which is comprised within the content of the latter. If this condition is not met, then the particular science which is thereby produced is no more than a castle in the air—no matter how logically correct the inferences within this science may be.[36]

I,69 Finally, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is something which is necessary (not that it is necessary as a clearly thought out and systematically constructed science, but rather as a natural predisposition). Logic, on the other hand, is an artificial product of the freedom of the human mind. Without the *Wissenschaftslehre,* no knowledge or science would be possible at all; without logic, all of the sciences could still have come into being, only somewhat later. The former is the sole condition for all of the sciences; the latter is a highly beneficial device for securing and facilitating scientific progress.

I will give examples to illustrate what has just been scientifically deduced.

"$A = A$" is undoubtedly a logically correct proposition, and insofar as it is, it means "*if* A is posited, then A is posited." This raises two questions: Is A posited? And why and to what extent is A posited, *if* it is posited? Or, in other words, what in fact is the connection between this *if* and this *then?*

Suppose that the A in the previous proposition means "I," and thus that it possesses its own specific content. In this case the proposition means first of all "I am I," or "*If* I am posited, then I am posited." But because the subject of this proposition is the absolute subject, the subject purely and simply, then (in this single case) the proposition's inner con-

[36]"This was the procedure of those pre-Kantian dogmatic systems, which propounded a false concept of 'thing'" (Fichte's marginal note).

tent is posited along with its form: "I am posited, *because* I have posited myself. I am, *because* I am." Consequently, logic says: "*If A* is, then *A* is." The *Wissenschaftslehre,* however, says: "*Because A* (i.e., this specific *A* = I) is, then *A* is." And thus the first question, "Is *A* (i.e., this specific *A*) posited?" would be answered in the following way: It is posited, *for* it is posited. It is posited unconditionally and absolutely.

Suppose that the *A* in our original proposition did not mean "I," but something else—anything else—instead. Then what we have just said permits us to see the condition under which we can say that *A* is posited and also lets us see the justification for the inference "if *A* is posited, then *A* is posited." The reason is as follows: the proposition "*A* = *A*" is originally valid *only for the I.* It is a proposition derived from the proposition
I,70 "I am I," which is a proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Thus all of the content to which the proposition "*A* = *A*" is supposed to be applicable must be contained within the I. Therefore, *A* can be nothing but something *posited within the I,* and the proposition in question now reads: "That which is posited within the I is posited." If *A* is posited within the I, then *A* is posited (i.e., to the extent that it is posited as something possible, actual, or necessary). And this proposition is incontrovertibly true—if the I is supposed to be I. If, furthermore, the I is posited because it is posited, then everything which is posited within the I is also posited because it is posited, and so long as *A* is something which is posited within the I, then *A* is posited if it is posited. Thus our second question is answered as well.

§7. How is the *Wissenschaftslehre,* qua Science, Related to Its Object?

Every proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre* has form and content. One knows something, and there *is* something about which one has knowledge. But of course, the *Wissenschaftslehre* is itself the science of something, and not this "something" itself. Consequently, the *Wissenschaftslehre* as such, along with all of its propositions, would be the form of a certain content which is present in advance of this theory. How is the *Wissenschaftslehre* related to this content, and what are the consequences of this relationship?[37]

The object of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is, after all, the system of human knowledge. This knowledge exists independently of the science of the same, though it is only through this science that such knowledge is

[37] "Note that we have entirely abstracted from this question until now, and that everything which has been said so far needs to be modified in the light of the answer to this question" (Fichte's marginal note).

established in a systematic form. What then is this new form, and what distinguishes it from that form which must be present prior to this science? And how is this science as such distinguished from its object?

We may call what exists in the human mind independently of the science in question "the acts of the mind." These constitute the *what* which is present in advance. These acts occur in certain specific ways,
I,71 which serve to distinguish one act from another and which constitute the *how* of what is present in the mind. Therefore, both content and form are originally present in the human mind prior to our knowledge, and they are inseparably connected with each other. Every act occurs in a specific way, in accordance with a law. This law determines the act. If all the acts of the mind are connected among themselves and are subject to general, specific, and individual laws, then they present a system for any observer.

It is, however, by no means necessary that the temporal order in which these acts occur in our minds should actually correspond to that systematic order in which they are derived from each other. It is not necessary that we should first become conscious of that act which subsumes all others and furnishes the highest law, and that we should next become conscious of that act which subsumes fewer acts, and so forth. Furthermore, it by no means follows that we encounter these acts in a pure and unmixed state. Several acts which some possible observer might well be able to distinguish from each other might appear to us to be only one act. The highest act of the intellect,[38] for example, is the act of self-positing, but it is by no means necessary that this be (temporally) the first act of the mind of which we are clearly conscious. Nor is it necessary that we ever become clearly conscious of this act of self-positing, or that the intellect be capable of thinking simply "I am," without at the same time thinking of something which is *not itself.*

The acts of the human mind include the entire contents of any possible *Wissenschaftslehre,* but they do not contain this science itself. In order to create such a science an additional act of the human mind is required, an act not included among all of these actions, namely, the mind's act of becoming conscious of its own mode of acting as such. Since this new act is not supposed to be included among those acts of the mind which are all necessary—and which comprise all the necessary acts there are—it must be a free act. Consequently, the *Wissenschaftslehre,* insofar as it is supposed to be a systematic science, originates in exactly the same way

[38] "The highest act of the human mind" (first edition). In the second edition of §7 Fichte substituted "die Intelligenz" in almost every passage where, in the first edition, he had written "der menschliche Geist." The translation follows the second edition, without further indicating substitutions of "the intellect" for the first edition's "the human mind."

that all systematic sciences do, namely, through a specific determination
I,72 of freedom, which in this case is the specific free act of raising to consciousness the manner in which the intellect acts. All that distinguishes the *Wissenschaftslehre* from other sciences is this: the object of these other sciences is itself a free act, whereas the object of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a set of necessary acts.

By means of this free act, something which in itself is already form (i.e., the necessary action of the intellect) is incorporated as content into a new form (the form of knowledge or consciousness). Thus the act in question is an act of reflection. These necessary actions are torn from that sequence in which they themselves might occur and are set forth in a pure, unmixed form. Consequently this same act is also an act of abstraction. It is impossible to reflect without abstracting.

That form of consciousness in which the intellect's necessary mode of acting is to be incorporated is itself undoubtedly included among the intellect's necessary modes of acting, and the intellect's mode of acting will undoubtedly be incorporated into the form of consciousness in precisely the same way in which anything else is incorporated into this form. Thus the question: Where, for the purpose of a possible *Wissenschaftslehre*, is this form supposed to come from? is not intrinsically difficult to answer. Yet if one thus avoids the question of form, then all of the difficulties come to focus on the question of content. In order to incorporate within the form of consciousness the necessary manner in which the intellect acts, we must already be familiar with this manner of acting as such—which manner of acting must, consequently, already be incorporated within this form of consciousness. Thus we would be caught up in a circle.

According to what has been said, this manner of acting is supposed to be separated as such from all that it is *not*, and this separation is supposed to be accomplished by an act of reflective abstraction. This abstraction occurs freely. Philosophical judgment[39] is not led to engage in such abstraction by a blind compulsion. The whole difficulty is contained in the following question: What rules guide freedom in this act of separation? How does the philosopher know *what* he is supposed to recognize
I,73 as part of the intellect's necessary mode of acting and what he should discard as something merely accidental?[40]

This is something which he simply cannot know, insofar anyway as he is not already conscious of that which he is supposed to raise to consciousness (which is self-contradictory). It follows that this activity is governed by no rule at all and that there can be no such rule. The human mind makes various experiments. By blind groping it succeeds in

[39]"The human mind" (first edition).
[40]"How does the human mind know *what* to incorporate and to discard?" (first edition).

reaching the dawn, and only then does it emerge into the bright light. It is led at first by obscure feelings* (the origin and reality of which the *Wissenschaftslehre* has to disclose). And if we had not begun with obscure feelings for things which we did not clearly recognize until later, we would still have no clear concepts to this day and would still be that lump of clay which first wrenched itself from the earth. This is also confirmed by the history of philosophy, and we have now provided the real reason which explains why it is only after much aimless wandering that a few people have been able to become conscious of something which, nevertheless, lies openly in every human mind and which anyone can easily grasp once it has been pointed out to him. All philosophers have shared
I,74 the same goal: they all wished to use reflection in order to separate the manner of acting necessary to the intellect from any accidental accompanying conditions. And all philosophers have actually accomplished this separation—only more or less purely or completely. On the whole, however, philosophical judgment has always progressed and moved nearer to its goal.

Yet this act of reflection is also a part of the intellect's necessary mode of acting—not insofar as such reflection does or does not occur (for in this respect reflection is free), but rather insofar as it occurs *in accordance with laws* and insofar as the specific manner in which such reflection occurs is something determined (on the condition that it occurs at all). From this it follows that the overall system of the intellect's manner of acting must include within itself the laws which govern this reflection. Once this science has been completed, then one can of course check to see whether or not one has succeeded in including within it the laws governing such reflection. One might, therefore, believe that a clearly evident demonstration of the correctness of our scientific system would at least be possible after the fact.

Yet those laws of reflection, which, in the course of the *Wissenschafts-*

*This makes it clear that the philosopher requires an obscure feeling for what is right, or genius, to no less an extent than does, for instance, the poet or the artist. The difference is in the type. The latter needs a sense of *beauty;* the former needs a sense of *truth.* Certainly, such a sense does exist.

[Additional remarks in the second edition:]

I am not quite sure how and why, but an otherwise admirable philosophical author[41] has become a bit agitated over the innocent assertion contained in the foregoing note. "One would," he says, "prefer to leave the empty word 'genius' to tightrope walkers, French cooks, 'beautiful souls,' artists, and others. For sound sciences it would be better to advance a theory of discovery." One should indeed advance such a theory, which will certainly happen as soon as science has reached the point where it is possible to discover such a theory. But where is the contradiction between such a project and the assertion made above? And how will we discover such a theory of discovery? By means, perhaps, of a theory of the discovery of a theory of discovery? And this?

[41]Viz., Salomon Maimon. The passage Fichte quotes (inexactly, as usual) is from Maimon's essay "Ueber den Gebrauch der Philosophie zur Erweiterung der Erkenntnis," which was published in the *Philosophisches Journal* 2 (1795).

lehre, we find to be the only possible laws through which a *Wissenschaftslehre* could come into being (even if they agree with those rules which we hypothetically presupposed at the outset of our enterprise), are nevertheless themselves results of their own previous employment. Here a new circle reveals itself: we have presupposed certain laws of reflection, and now, in the course of our science, we find that these are the only laws possible. From this we conclude that our presupposition was correct and that our science is formally correct. If we had started with other presuppositions, then we would undoubtedly have also found in our science that other laws are the only correct ones. The only question is whether or not these laws would have agreed with the ones we presupposed. If not, then we could be sure that either the laws we presupposed or the laws we discovered (or, most likely, both) were false.

I,75 Thus we cannot prove anything after the fact by the indicated type of faulty circular inference. Instead, we infer the correctness of the system from the *agreement* between what we presupposed and what we discovered. But this is only a negative proof, which establishes mere probability. If the reflections we discover do *not* agree with those we presupposed, then the system is surely false. If they do agree, then it *may* be correct; but it does not necessarily *have to* be correct. For even though it is true that, if there is only one system in human knowledge, then there is but *one* way in which such agreement can be *correctly deduced,* it nevertheless always remains possible to produce such agreement accidentally through two or more *incorrect deductions* which cooperate to produce such agreement. The situation here is like that of testing division by multiplication. If I fail to obtain the product desired and obtain any other number instead, then I have certainly erred at some point in my calculations. If I obtain the results desired, then it is probable that I have calculated correctly, but it is still no more than probable. For I might have made the same mistake in multiplying that I did in dividing; I might, for example, have said that $5 \times 9 = 36$ in both cases. Thus the agreement would prove nothing. So it is with the *Wissenschaftslehre:* it is not merely a rule, but it is at the same time the calculation [according to this rule]. A person who doubts the correctness of our product does not doubt the eternal validity of the law which prescribes that one must posit the one factor just as many times as the same unit is contained in the other factor. Perhaps he is just as sure of the law as we are, and what he doubts is simply whether we have correctly followed the rule in question.

Thus, even if we establish that supreme systematic unity which is the negative condition for the correctness of our system, something more is still required. This "something more" is something which can never be strictly demonstrated, something which can only be assumed to be probable, namely, that this unity itself is not something which has been accidentally produced by means of incorrect deduction. Several strategies

may be used to increase this probability: if the series of propositions are no longer present in one's memory, one may think them through again
I,76 several times; one may proceed in the opposite direction and deduce the first principle from the results; one may reflect upon one's own reflections, etc. In this way the probability becomes ever greater, but what was merely probable never turns into a certainty. If a person has pursued his inquiries with honesty* and without having presupposed those results which he wished to discover, then he may indeed content himself with this probability. And if someone doubts the tenability of our system, we may demand *that he point out to us the error in our reasoning.* But one may never claim infallibility. That system of the human mind which is supposed to be portrayed by the *Wissenschaftslehre* is absolutely certain and infallible. Everything that is based upon this system is absolutely true. It never errs, and anything which has ever been or will ever be necessarily
I,77 present within a human soul is true. If *men* have erred, the mistake did not lie in something necessary; instead, the mistake was made by free reflective judgment when it substituted one law for another. If our *Wissenschaftslehre* is an accurate portrayal of this system of the human mind, then, like this system itself, it is absolutely certain and infallible. But the question is precisely whether and to what extent our portrayal is accurate,** and this is something which we can never show by strict proofs, but only by probable ones. Our portrayal contains truth only on

*The philosopher requires not merely the sense of truth, but the love of truth as well. By this I do not mean that he should eschew the attempt to establish previously assumed results by means of reasoning which he himself realizes to be sophistical—but which he might believe he can conceal from his contemporaries. In such a case he himself knows that he does not love truth. Yet everyone is his own judge in this matter, and no person has the right to accuse another of this kind of dishonesty, unless the evidence for it is glaringly obvious. But the philosopher must also guard against those involuntary instances of sophistical reasoning, to which no investigator is more prone than the investigator of the human mind. He must seek only the truth, whatever it turns out to be. It is not enough that he have an obscure feeling of this duty. He must become clearly conscious of it and must make it his supreme maxim. He must welcome even the truth that there is no truth at all—provided only that this were true. He must not be indifferent to any proposition, no matter how dry or oversubtle it appears to be. All propositions must be equally sacred in his eyes, for they are all part of the same system of truth, and each supports all the others. He must never ask, "What consequences will this have?" but must proceed straight along his path, no matter what the consequences may be. He must shirk no effort, and yet he must always be prepared to abandon the most strenuous and profound endeavors the moment someone shows him or he himself discovers that they are unfounded. And suppose that he has made a mistake? What more would this be than the common fate of every thinker so far?

**[Note to the second edition.] The modesty of this remark has been contrasted with the great immodesty which, it is alleged, the author has subsequently displayed. It would certainly have been impossible for me to have foreseen the sort of objections with which I would have to deal and the form which these would take. And of course at that time I was not nearly so well acquainted with the majority of philosophical authors as I am now. Otherwise, I would not have failed to react in advance to the objections which have actually been made. Meanwhile, there is nothing in the above remark which contradicts my conduct since then. The above remark is concerned only with objections to my *inferences.* My opponents, however, have not yet reached that point. They are still quarreling over the first principle, i.e., over my entire view of philosophy. My innermost conviction, then as

the condition and only insofar as it is accurate. We are not the legislators of the human mind, but rather its historians. We are not, of course, journalists, but rather writers of pragmatic history.[42]

Pertinent to this also is the fact that a system can actually be on the
I,78 whole correct, even though its individual parts lack complete self-evidence. Here and there it may contain an incorrect inference or a faulty syllogism; demonstrable propositions may be advanced without proof or be proven incorrectly; nevertheless, the most important results may still be correct. This would appear to be impossible. It would seem that the tiniest deviation from the straight line must necessarily lead to an infinitely increasing deviation. And this is certainly what would happen if man had to arrive at all that he knows by means of clear thinking, and if it were not far more often the case that he is unconsciously governed by the fundamental tendency of reason, which, by means of new deviations from the straight path of *formal* and logically correct argument, leads him back to the only result which is *materially* true—a result which he would never have been able to arrive at by making correct inferences from his incorrect intermediary propositions.[43] The deviation would grow and grow if feeling did not often compensate for the previous deviation by producing new deviations from the straight path of argument—deviations which lead him back to a point he would never have been able to regain by means of correct inference.

Thus even if a universally valid *Wissenschaftslehre* were to be established, philosophical judgment would still have work to do in this field. The *Wissenschaftslehre* will require continual improvement. There will always remain gaps to be filled, proofs which require improvement, and terms which have to be more precisely specified.

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well as now, is that, so long as one knows what the issue is, there can be no quarrel whatsoever concerning this point. And, in fact, I never counted upon such a dispute. I am speaking of objections which give at least the appearance of being well grounded, which offer at least a pretense of *proving* and *establishing* something. Those persons who have supposedly been struck by my alleged immodesty have not offered such objections. Here is the explanation, an explanation which I could not then suppose would be necessary: Rubbish of this sort—viz., the sort of rubbish which is spoken by those who have not acquired the necessary preliminary knowledge or conducted the necessary preliminary exercises and who show that they do not even know what is at issue; the sort of rubbish which is uttered in a howling and spiteful tone; the sort of rubbish which cannot have sprung from zeal for the progress of science and thus must spring from less worthy motives, such as petty jealousy, vindictiveness, thirst for glory, desire for money, and other similar motives—such rubbish does not deserve the slightest forbearance, and in replying to such rubbish one is not governed by the rules of *scientific* dispute at all.

Why do these commentators fail to draw *the only* conclusion which is appropriate, viz., that the tone which displeases them so much owes its origin solely to their own tone?

[42]"A history is pragmatically composed when it teaches prudence, i.e., instructs the world how it could provide for its interest better than, or at least as well as, has been done in the past." Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. L. W. Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), p. 34n.

[43]"And this is certainly what would happen if man were merely a thinking being and not a feeling one as well" (first edition).

I have two more remarks to add to the foregoing.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* presupposes that the rules of reflection and ab-
I,79 straction are familiar and valid. It has to make this presupposition, and there is nothing to be ashamed of in this and no reason to make a mystery of it and to conceal the fact. Just like any other science, the *Wissenschaftslehre* may express itself and draw direct conclusions. It may presuppose all the rules of logic and may employ whatever concepts it requires. But it presupposes these things merely in order to be able to make itself intelligible; thus it presupposes them without drawing the least conclusion from them. Everything provable must be proved: except for that first and highest principle, all propositions must be derived. Thus, for example, though neither the logical principle of opposition (i.e., the principle of contradiction, which is the basis of all analysis) nor the principle of sufficient reason (i.e., "no two things are opposed to each other unless they are equivalent in some third thing, and no two things are equivalent unless they are opposed in some third thing," which is the basis of all synthesis) is derived from the absolutely first principle, they are derived from two first principles which are based upon the absolutely first principle. These two principles are indeed first principles, but they are not absolute ones. They only contain an absolute element. Accordingly, these propositions [i.e., the two principles containing something absolute], along with the logical principles based upon them, must indeed be derived, though not proven. Let me make myself even clearer: the *Wissenschaftslehre* establishes a proposition which has been thought and then expressed in words. Such a proposition corresponds to an action of the human mind, an action which, in itself, does not necessarily have to have been *thought of* at all. Nothing has to be presupposed for this action—nothing except that without which it would not be possible qua action. What is necessary for the possibility of the action in question is not something which is tacitly presupposed; it is, rather, the business of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to establish it clearly and definitely, and to establish it *as* that without which the action in question would not be possible. If, for example, action *D* is the fourth action in a series, then it must be preceded by another action, *C*, and must be proven to be the sole condition for the possibility of action *C*. *C*, in turn, must be preceded by action *B*. Action *A*, however, is simply possible; it is totally unconditioned, and thus it neither
I,80 may nor should presuppose anything at all. However, the *act of thinking* of action *A* is an entirely different action from *A* itself and presupposes far more. If we suppose that the thought of *A* is itself action *D* in the sequence of actions which we have to establish, it is then clear that it presupposes *A*, *B*, and *C* for its possibility. Furthermore, since the first task of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is to think this first act of the mind, it is also clear that *A*, *B*, and *C* must be tacitly presupposed. It is only when we arrive at proposition *D* that these presuppositions are proven, but by then we have again presupposed several more things. The form of the science, therefore, is

constantly surging ahead of its content. This is the reason for our previous announcement that the science as such can possess no more than probability. What is portrayed and the portrayal of the same are members of two different series. In the first series nothing unproven is presupposed; the second series is not possible unless some things are presupposed at the beginning which cannot be proven until later.

The kind of reflection which governs the whole *Wissenschaftslehre* (insofar as it is a science) is an act of *representing.* From this it by no means follows that everything which is reflected *upon* is also nothing but an act of representing. In the *Wissenschaftslehre* the I *is represented.* But it does not follow that the I is represented merely *as* representing.[44] Other features may well be found in this I. Qua philosophizing *subject,* the I is indisputably only a representing I, but it might well be more than this qua *object* of philosophizing. Representing is the highest and absolutely first act of the philosopher as such. But the absolutely first act of the human mind might well be something else. In advance of all experience it is already probable that this is so, since representation is something which can be exhaustively described and which operates in a thoroughly necessary manner. Consequently, there must be an ultimate foundation for the necessity of representation, a foundation which, qua ultimate foundation, can be based upon nothing further. Assuming this to be true, it would follow that a science based upon the concept of representation might indeed be a very useful propaedeutic to our science, but could not itself be the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[45] One thing which certainly
I,81 does follow from what has been said here is that we can be concious of all of the intellect's modes of activity (which are supposed to be exhaustively described within the *Wissenschaftslehre*) only in the form of representation, that is, only insofar as and in the manner that they are represented.

63

Part III
Hypothetical Division of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

§8

The absolute first principle must be shared by all the parts of the *Wissenschaftslehre,*[46] since it is supposed to provide the foundation, not

[44]"Die Reflexion, welche in der ganzen Wissenschaftslehre, insofern sie Wissenschaft ist, herrscht, ist ein *Vorstellen*; daraus aber folgt gar nichte, dass alles, *worüber* reflectirt wird, auch nur ein Vorstellen seyn werde. In der Wissenschaftslehre *wird* das Ich *vorgestellt*; es folgt aber nicht, dass es bloss *als* vorstellend vorgestellt werde."

[45]An allusion to Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, which takes the concept of representation as its highest concept and starting point. See Fichte's discussion of this in the *Aenesidemus* review, above, Section I.

[46]This entire "Hypothetische Eintheilung der Wissenschaftslehre" was omitted from the

merely for a portion of human knowledge, but rather for knowledge in its entirety. Division presupposes an opposition, the terms of which must both be equivalent to some third term.

Suppose that the highest concept is the I, and that a not-I is opposed to this I. It is clear that the not-I cannot be placed in opposition to the I unless it is *posited,* and indeed, posited within the highest thing we can conceive of, that is, posited within the I. It would thus be necessary to
64 consider the I in two different respects: as that *in* which the not-I is posited, and as that *which* is posited in opposition to the not-I, and which, consequently, is itself posited in the absolute I. This latter I is supposed to be equivalent to the not-I, in the sense that they are both posited in the absolute I, and, at the same time and in the same respect, it is supposed to be opposed to the not-I. But this is conceivable only if there is in the I some third element in terms of which the I and the not-I would be equivalent. This third element is the concept of quantity. Both the I and the not-I have a quantity which is determined through their opposition to each other.* The first possibility is that the I is determined by the not-I (in respect of its quantity). To this extent the I is something dependent, and its proper name is "intellect." This dependent I is dealt with in the Theoretical Part of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This Theoretical Part is based upon the concept of representation, a concept which is itself derived from (and thus is to be demonstrated by means of) the first principles.

The I, however, is supposed to be absolute and to be determined purely and simply by itself. But if it is determined by the not-I, then it is not self-determined—which contradicts the highest and absolute first principle. In order to avoid this contradiction, we must assume that that not-I which is supposed to determine the intellect is itself determined by
65 the I—though in this case the I would be considered not as the representing I, but rather as an I which possesses absolute causality. Yet such a causality would entirely cancel out the opposed not-I and, along with it, those representations which are dependent upon the not-I. Therefore, the assumption of such an absolute causality would contradict the second and third first principles. It follows from this that we have to represent this absolute causality *as* something which contradicts representation, as something which *cannot be represented,* as a causality which is not a causality. The concept of a causality which is not a causality is, however, the concept of *striving.* Such causality is conceivable only under the condition

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second edition, as well as from *SW* (which follows the text of the second edition). Page numbers in the margins of this section refer to the pages of the first edition (see *AA* I, 1: 150–52).

*The only absolutely a priori concepts are the concept of the I, the concept of the not-I, and the concept of quantity (limitation). All other concepts are derived from these three by means of opposition and equation.

of a completed approximation to infinity—which is itself something inconceivable. This concept of striving (the necessity of which has to be proven) provides the foundation for the second part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, which is called the Practical Part.

Considered in itself, this second part is far and away the most important. Admittedly, the first part is no less important, but it is so only as the foundation of the second part and because this second part is quite unintelligible apart from it. It is only in the second part that the Theoretical Part is precisely delimited and given a sound foundation. This is so because the necessary striving that it brings to light makes it possible to answer the following questions: Why, given the presence of an affection, must we have representations at all? What justification do we have for referring the representation to something outside of us as its cause? What justification do we have for even assuming the existence of a faculty of representation, which operates completely in accordance with laws (which laws themselves are not represented as indigenous to the faculty of representation, but rather as the laws of the striving I—the
66 applicability of which is conditioned by the effect upon feeling of the counterstriving not-I)? In this second part the foundations are laid for new and thoroughly elaborated theories of the pleasant, the beautiful, the sublime, the free obedience of nature to its own laws, God, so-called common sense or the natural sense of truth, and finally, for new theories of natural law and morality, the principles of which are material as well as formal. All of this follows upon the establishment of three absolutes: an absolute I which is governed by laws which it gives itself and which can be represented only under the condition of an affection by the not-I; an absolute not-I which is free and independent of all of our laws and which can be represented only as expressing these laws—either positively or negatively, but always to a finite degree; and an absolute capacity within ourselves to determine ourselves absolutely according to the effects of both the not-I and the I, a capacity which can be represented only insofar as it distinguishes an affection by the not-I from an effect of the I or from a law.[47] No philosophy can go beyond these three absolutes.

[47] "Alles durch Aufstellung dreier Absoluten. Eines absoluten Ich, unter selbstgegebnen, unter Bedingung einer Einwirkung des Nicht-Ich vorstellbaren Gesetzen; eines absoluten von allen unsern Gesetzen unabhängigen und freien, unter der Bedingung, daß es dieselben positiv oder negativ, aber immer in einem endlichen Grade ausdrücke, vorstellbaren Nicht-Ich; und eines absoluten, unter der Bedingung, daß es eine Einwirkung des Nicht-Ich von einer Wirkung des Ich, oder einem Gesetze unterscheide, vorstellbaren Vermögens in uns, uns nach Maaßgabe der Einwirkung beider, schlechthin zu bestimmen."

IV

Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation

Editor's Preface

Fichte arrived in Jena in May 1794, shortly before the beginning of the summer semester. He had devoted the spring to elaborating his new system and to writing a "prospectus" of the same to attract students to his private lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[1] But he did not intend to use his new position merely to expound an abstruse philosophical doctrine. He meant to have a direct effect on the entire university community. An obvious opportunity for pursuing these larger ambitions was presented by the course of "public" lectures, which—in addition to his more technical "private" lectures—he was expected to deliver during his first semester. To take full advantage of this opportunity, even before his appointment was official, Fichte inquired about using Reinhold's former lecture hall, adding: "I know that it is large, but I am presumptuous enough to proceed as if I were sure of filling it. For a series of public lectures one should select a topic of general interest, and I already have hit upon an idea for this purpose."[2]

Despite the fact that Fichte had to devote most of his energies during the spring to securing and elaborating his new systematic standpoint, he nevertheless was able to devote some of his time to the public lecture project and by midspring was able to announce that he had chosen as his topic "Morality for Scholars."[3] What he meant by this theme is evident from the following exerpt from the printed announcement of his lec-

[1]I.e., *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* translated above, Section III.

[2]Letter to K. A. Böttiger, February 4, 1794.

[3]Letter to K. A. Böttiger, April 2, 1794. The university catalog for the summer semester of 1794 lists Fichte's public lectures under the slightly different title *de officiis eruditorum* ("Concerning the Scholars' Duties"), which was also the title under which they were announced in the April 12, 1794, number of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* ("Die Lehre von den Pflichten der Gelehrten").

tures, appended to *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* when it was finally published in May.

> I still owe you an explanation of one further point. The sciences, as you all undoubtedly realize, were not invented as an idle mental occupation to meet the demand for a refined type of luxury. Were they no more than this, then the scholar would belong to that class to which all those belong who are living tools of a luxury which is nothing but a luxury; indeed, he would be a contender for first place in this class. All of our inquiries must aim at mankind's supreme goal, which is the improvement of the species to which we belong, and students of the sciences must, as it were, constitute that center from which humanity in the highest sense of the word radiates. Every addition to the sciences adds to the duties of its servants. It thus becomes increasingly necessary to bear the following questions seriously in mind: What is the scholar's proper vocation? What is his place in the scheme of things? What relation do scholars have to each other and to other men in general, especially to the various classes of men? How and by what means can scholars most expeditiously fulfill the duties which they incur through these relationships? And how do they have to develop the skills which this requires? These are the questions which I shall be trying to answer in the series of public lectures which I have announced under the title "Morality for Scholars." Do not expect a systematic science to be developed in these talks. The scholar more frequently falls short in his actions than in his knowledge. Let us instead, in the manner of a company of friends who are joined by more than a single bond, employ these hours together to kindle within ourselves a lofty and ardent sense of our collective duties.[4]

To attract the largest audience possible, Fichte scheduled his public lectures for Friday evenings at six. The first lecture in the series was delivered on May 23 before a boisterous and enthusiastic audience, and the reception that greeted subsequent lectures easily lived up to the high expectations raised by the first evening's success. Before long Fichte was privately boasting to his wife: "Previously, I didn't know how it would go. Though I had as many students as the other teachers, I didn't have half as many as my predecessor, Reinhold. I even began to have doubts about whether I would succeed. But lo and behold, I *have* succeeded already—and in just four weeks. I deliver my public lectures in the largest auditorium in Jena, and nevertheless there is always a crowd outside the door. Last night half the university honored me with cheers and solemn music. It is quite conceivable that I am now the most popular professor here and that today they would not even trade me for Reinhold."[5] A wealth of contemporary evidence supports this favorable self-

[4] *AA* I, 2: 153–54.

[5] Letter to Johanna Fichte, June 14–17, 1794. For a description of the pandemonium in the lecture hall on the night of Fichte's first lecture ("people were standing on tables, benches, and each other's heads"), see the excerpt from his May 26, 1794, letter to his wife which is translated above in the editor's introduction.

assessment. The lecture hall was filled to overflowing (often attracting an audience of more than five hundred), and the reception continued to be enthusiastic. In the short run at least, Fichte was a public success in his new career.

To be sure, Fichte's reputation as an outspoken radical had preceded him to Jena and certainly contributed to his initial success with the students. But this same reputation also assured him of enemies, especially among some of his colleagues at Jena and in certain court circles in Weimar, and the tumultuous popular success of the "Morality for Scholars" lectures could only have deepened the suspicions of such political opponents. Thus it was hardly surprising when a rumor began to circulate that Fichte had stated in his public lectures that "in ten or twenty years there will be no more kings or princes."[6] Though this rumor was obviously designed to undermine Fichte's position with the court, he in fact enjoyed the firm support of the duke and his advisers, who regarded the rumor as a transparent piece of malicious slander. Fichte, however, was extremely upset by reports that the rumor had reached Weimar, and on June 24, 1794, wrote Goethe an agitated letter in which he denounced the rumor as the product of a conspiracy against him, while at the same time insisting upon his right to teach the truth as he saw it and ostentatiously refusing to compromise on matters of principle. After announcing his intention to come to Weimar in order to confront his accusers in person, he added: "I am enclosing the *four public lectures which I have delivered so far* and in which I am supposed to have uttered this foolishness. I *quite deliberately* wrote these lectures out word for word and delivered them just as they were written, and I intend to have them *printed word for word* at the earliest opportunity." Requesting assurances of support from the court, Fichte concluded his letter with a thinly veiled threat to return to Switzerland if such assurances were not forthcoming.

On June 28, Fichte made the short journey to Weimar, where Voigt and Goethe succeeded in smoothing his easily ruffled feathers and in reassuring him of the court's full support. Nevertheless, he persisted with his previously announced plan to have the text of his lectures printed, which is how it happened that a short book titled *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* was published in Jena in September 1794. Though the original plan was to publish only the first four lectures in the "Morality for Scholars" series, Fichte quickly changed his mind and decided—perhaps at the suggestion of Goethe, with whom he continued to confer concerning his publication plans—to include the fifth lecture as well.[7]

[6]See Voigt to Goethe, June 15, 1794. In *Goethes Briefwechsel mit Christian Gottlob Voigt*, vol. I, ed. Hans Tümmler (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1949), pp. 138–39.

[7]In his June 30, 1794, letter to his wife Fichte mentions his intention to publish five lectures. Copies of all five lectures were sent to Goethe shortly thereafter (July 1 and 5, 1794).

Thus it was something of an accident that these lectures ever came to be published at all. Though Fichte would appear to have contemplated the eventual publication of the entire series,[8] the separate publication of the first five lectures was almost entirely the result of the "external circumstances" just described. The series of public lectures on "Morality for Scholars" continued throughout the summer semester and was resumed during the winter semester of 1794–95—though only to be broken off by another, more serious, set of "external circumstances." The complete set of lectures was thus neither delivered nor published[9] by Fichte himself, whose attitude toward the five printed lectures remained uncharacteristically modest.[10] The published lectures received generally hostile reviews, which served to attract even more attention to their already controversial author. They proved popular, however, with readers of the younger generation and elicited the favorable comment of critics as discriminating as Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel.[11]

Though the text of *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* presents few special problems for contemporary readers, a few points deserve brief comment. First, there is the problem of the title. What is a *Gelehrter?* Though translated as "scholar," a *Gelehrter* is, above all, an

[8]See the remark in the preface to the published text, in which Fichte describes these five lectures as providing "entry into a whole which the author wishes to complete and to lay before the public at the proper time."

[9]The five published lectures, together with surviving manuscripts of all the other lectures in the series, as well as other relevant documents, have been assembled in a single, convenient volume, which includes a very informative introduction by Reinhard Lauth. *Von den Pflichten der Gelehrten: Jenaer Vorlesungen, 1794–95,* ed. Reinhard Lauth, Hans Jacob, and Peter K. Schneider (Hamburg: Meiner, 1971). Three of the additional unpublished lectures are translated below in Section V, "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy." For more information on the continuation—and eventual cancellation—of Fichte's public lectures during the winter semester 1794–95, see the editor's introduction.

[10]On October 6, 1794, Fichte sent a copy of the book to Johann Friedrich Schultz, along with a letter in which he observed: "I am enclosing a few lectures which I was forced to have published because of some gossip concerning the aristocracy. I myself consider them to be insignificant. They will have achieved their purpose if they suceed in creating a certain mood which I would like to instill in our students." A similar judgment on the published lectures is contained in Fichte's letter to Kant, October 6, 1794. One may well wonder why Fichte persisted in his original plan to publish these lectures, even after the initial rumor was quelled. A likely reason is that he needed the money that publication would earn him. (See Fichte's proud report in his June 30, 1794, letter to his wife concerning how much money he expects to obtain for the publication rights to the five lectures, in note 54 to the editor's introduction, above.)

[11]Schiller expressed his admiration for the "noble ideas" in Fichte's lectures in several private letters written during the fall of 1794 (see *FvB,* pp. 23–28) and publicly praised *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* in a note to the fourth of his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795). Friedrich Schlegel, in a letter of August 17, 1795, to his brother August Wilhelm, expressed his appreciation for the prose style of Fichte's lectures, which he contrasted favorably with the style of Schiller's lectures. Of Fichte himself, he added: "He is the sort of man for whom Hamlet sighed in vain. Every feature of his public life seems to say: 'here is a *man.*'"

"educated person." Insofar as "scholar" suggests a somewhat narrow professional preoccupation with texts and editions, it is an inadequate rendering of the German term. A *Gelehrter* is not only an "educated" person; he is also one who, as Fichte puts it in the fourth lecture, "dedicates his life" to the acquisition of knowledge. But he is not merely a "researcher"; he is equally concerned to share his knowledge with others. *Der Gelehrterstand* might thus be rendered as "the academic community," and *ein Gelehrter* as "an academic"[12]—though it must be admitted that Fichte goes on to make demands upon his "scholar" with which few contemporary "academics" would be comfortable. For the true "scholar" is not merely a researcher and teacher; he values knowledge precisely for its vital contribution to the advancement of mankind. Thus it is the special responsibility of the scholar to supervise and to regulate human progress toward perfection, and in order to do this he must at least strive to be "the ethically best man of his time."

What makes these five lectures especially interesting, however, is the manner in which Fichte's discussion of his announced topic is embedded within a much larger and more general account of the nature or "vocation" of man as such, as well as a general theory of obligation and of society.[13] Of the five lectures, only the fourth is explicitly devoted to "the scholar's vocation." The first lecture presents a general account of human nature (or "the vocation of man"). A noteworthy feature of this lecture is its derivation of the categorical imperative from the posited absolute being of the I. Admittedly, the absolute unity of the I is contradicted by the manifold individual determinations of one's sensuous being; that is, reason and sensibility are not in harmony. But they *ought* to be, for I *should* be one. Hence Fichte is able to propose a striking reformulation of the categorical imperative: "Never will things which contradict each other."[14]

The second lecture proposes an equally ingenious account of man's social nature and offers a sketchy derivation of a "fundamental drive"

[12]*Bestimmung* is another term that presents its share of difficulties for the translator. Though adequately rendered as "vocation" in the title of these lectures, the German term has a much wider meaning than does the English one. The verb *bestimmen* means "to specify" or "to determine," and the *Bestimmung* of something is its "determination" or "specific nature," and, by extension, its "characterstic" or "determining" feature. Thus an alternate translation of the title of these lectures might be "Some Lectures on What It Means to Be an Academic."

[13]Summarizing the entire series in the first public lecture of the winter semester, Fichte said: "As most of you already know, the subject of my lectures is the scholar's vocation. The vocation of man as such is infinite self-improvement. This is also the final aim of all social bonds between men. The *scholar's* vocation is to supervise this progress of culture in human society—to promote it and to give it direction" (*AA* II, 3: 357).

[14]In fact, Fichte had previously attempted just such a derivation of the moral law in the new section added to the second edition of his *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*. See too his letter to F. I. Niethammer, December 6, 1793 (translated below, Section X, no. 6).

toward society and social improvement. This drive toward perfection, combined with the natural inequality of men, is employed, in the third lecture, to explain and to justify the existence of various professional classes. The inequality of social classes is reason's way of overcoming the natural inequality of individuals. Only after all of this has been accomplished is Fichte finally in a position, in his fourth lecture, to deal directly with his announced topic.

The final lecture, which was added as something of an afterthought, does not develop any further the line of argument pursued so vigorously in the first four. Instead, it serves to illustrate and, in a way, to test the conclusions arrived at in the first four lectures. The final lecture examines the notorious claim that education and culture have done more to corrupt and to harm human beings than to improve or to perfect them. Thus, according to this view, man can only be "improved" by forsaking "civilization" and "returning to nature." Without citing any specific texts, Fichte quite uncritically attributes this view to Rousseau. In fact, Rousseau's own position is far more subtle, and his critique of "civilization" is far more qualified than Fichte represents it to be.[15] Be this as it may, what Fichte wishes to examine in this final lecture is a widespread feeling that, however inaccurately, was—and indeed, in many quarters still is—widely associated with Rousseau, namely, the feeling that cultivation of the arts and sciences has merely served to corrupt naturally good human beings. It is not difficult for Fichte to expose the internal contradictions and external limitations of such a position. He concludes by endorsing what he takes to be Rousseau's ideal of harmony between reason and sensibility, but for Fichte this unity is something that lies ahead of, not behind, us. It represents an ideal we should infinitely approximate, not a natural state from which we have fallen.

In both content and style, Fichte's public lectures were perfectly calculated to impress and overwhelm his audience. With their exquisite balance between confidential flattery of the audience, philosophical analysis, social criticism, and moral exortation, these lectures bear striking witness to Fichte's public ambitions and talents.[16] If they still make stir-

[15]Presumably, the text Fichte has in mind is Rousseau's celebrated prize essay of 1750, the *First Discourse*, which deals with the question: "Has the Restoration of the Arts and Sciences Had a Purifying Effect upon Morals?" Like Kant, Fichte was a great admirer of Rousseau and a dedicated student of his writings. But—like Kant in this regard as well—he disagreed profoundly with many of Rousseau's positions and conclusions. Rousseau's influence upon these lectures is not limited to the fifth one. For example, Fichte's derivation of social classes (in the third lecture) may be profitably understood as an oblique critique of Rousseau's treatment of the same theme in his so-called *Second Discourse* (1755), in which he discusses the question: "What Is the Origin of Inequality among Men, and Is It Authorized by Natural Law?"

[16]"Fichte really intends for his philosophy to have an effect upon the world. He carefully nourishes and cultivates that predisposition toward restless activity which can be found in the heart of every noble young man, and does so in order that this will ultimately

ring reading today, how much more strongly must they have moved the impressionable young men to whom they were first addressed just five short years after the start of the French Revolution. If Fichte's rhetoric can somehow survive the triple ordeal of print, time, and translation, imagine the effect it must have had upon a festive crowd of students, jammed shoulder to shoulder into a small lecture hall in a provincial university town on a warm summer evening.

The text of *Einige Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW*, VI: 291–346 (*AA* I, 3: 25–68). The four "Remarks to the Danish Edition" (1796) were elicited from Fichte by his Danish translator, Jonas Collins. Since these "remarks" include several references to the first part of *Grundlage des Naturrechts,* but none to the second part, it is likely they were written in late 1795. No copies of Fichte's original German text have survived, but Hans Schulz translated the Danish "Remarks" back into German and published them as "Zusätze Fichtes zu seinen Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten," *Kant-Studien* 25 (1920): 202–9. They are also included in *Von den Pflichten der Gelehrten: Jenaer Vorlesungen, 1794–95,* pp. 118–23.

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bear some fruit. At every opportunity he insists that man's vocation lies in 'Acting! Acting!'" (Forberg, *Fragmente aus meinen Papieren,* p. 63; also quoted in *FvB,* p. 30). Concerning the often overlooked role and systematic position of these lectures within the overall plan of Fichte's lectures and philosophy, see the editor's preface to "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy," below, Section V.

Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation

VI,291

Preface

These lectures were delivered this past summer semester before a considerable number of our students. They provide entry into a whole which the author wishes to complete and to lay before the public at the proper time. External circumstances, which can contribute nothing to the correct evaluation or understanding of these pages, have induced me to have these first five lectures printed separately and, moreover, to have them printed exactly in the form in which they were first delivered, without altering one single word. This may excuse several careless expressions. Owing to my other work, I was from the beginning unable to polish them in the way I would have liked. Declamation can be used to assist an oral delivery, but revising them for publication would have conflicted with my secondary aim in publishing them.[1]

Several expressions found in these lectures will not please every reader, but for this the author should not be blamed. In pursuing my inquiries I did not ask whether something would meet with approval or not, but rather, whether it might be true; and what, according to the best of my knowledge, I considered to be true I expressed as well as I could.

In addition, however, to those readers who have their own reasons to be displeased by what is said here, there may be others for whom what is
VI,292 said here will seem to be useless, because it is something which cannot be achieved and which fails to correspond to anything in the real world as it now exists. Indeed, I am afraid that the majority of otherwise upright, respectable, and sober persons will judge these lectures in this way. For

[1]If he had revised the texts in any way, Fichte feared he might be accused of having removed the allegedly "revolutionary" remarks the lectures were rumored to contain.

although the number of persons capable of lifting themselves to the level of ideas has always been a minority in every age, this number (for reasons which I can certainly leave unmentioned) has never been smaller than it is right now. It may be true that, within that area to which ordinary experience assigns us, people have never thought for themselves more widely or judged more correctly than they do now; however, just as soon as they are supposed to go any distance beyond this familiar area, most persons are completely lost and blind. If it is not possible to rekindle the higher genius in such persons once it has been extinguished, then we must permit them to remain peacefully within the circle of ordinary experience. And insofar as they are useful and indispensible within this circle, we must grant them their undiminished value in and for this area. They are, however, guilty of a great injustice if they try to pull down to their own level everything which they cannot themselves reach: if, for example, they demand that everything which is published should be as easy to use as a cookbook or an arithmetic book or a book of rules and regulations, and if they decry everything which cannot be employed in such a manner.

That ideals cannot be depicted within the real world is something that we others know just as well as such persons do—perhaps we know this better than they. All we maintain is that reality must be judged in accordance with ideals and must be modified by those who feel themselves able to do so. Supposing that such persons cannot be convinced that this is true, still, since they are what they are, they lose very little by not being convinced, and mankind loses nothing. It merely becomes clear from this that they cannot be counted on to contribute anything to the project of improving mankind. Mankind will undoubtedly continue on its way. May a kindly nature reign over such persons, may it bestow upon them rain and sunshine at the proper time, wholesome food and undisturbed circulation, and in addition—intelligent thoughts!

Jena, Michaelmas 1794

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First Lecture
Concerning the Vocation of Man as Such

You are already somewhat acquainted with the purpose of the series of lectures which I am beginning today. I would like to answer—or rather, I would like to prompt you to answer—the following questions: What is the scholar's vocation?[2] What is his relationship to mankind as a

[2]For a discussion of the translation of *Gelehrter* as "scholar" and of *Bestimmung* as "vocation," see the editor's preface, above.

whole, as well as to the individual classes of men? What are his surest means of fulfilling his lofty vocation?

The scholar is a scholar only insofar as he is distinguished from other men who are not scholars. The concept of the scholar arises by comparison and by reference to society (by which is understood here not merely the state, but any aggregate whatsoever of rational men, living alongside each other and thus joined in mutual relations).

It follows that the scholar's vocation is conceivable only within society. The answer to the question What is the scholar's vocation? thus presupposes an answer to another question: What is the vocation of man within society?

The answer to this latter question presupposes, in turn, an answer to yet another, higher one: What is the vocation of man as such? That is to say, what is the vocation of man considered simply qua man, merely according to the concept of man as such—man isolated and considered
VI,294 apart from all the associations which are not necessarily included in the concept of man?*

If I may assert something without proof, something which has undoubtably already been demonstrated to many of you for a long time and something which others among you feel obscurely, but no less strongly on that account: All philosophy, all human thinking and teaching, all of your studies, and, in particular, everything which I will ever be able to present to you can have no purpose other than answering the questions just raised, and especially the last and highest question: What is the vocation of man as such, and what are his surest means for fulfilling it?

*[Note to the Danish edition.][3] One should be careful not to extend this proposition too far. The concept of man *in general,* disregarding the empirical conditions of his *actual existence,* certainly does not contain the property of being associated with other men. When we are talking about the vocation of man as such we undeniably must disregard these empirical conditions. But a *real* person, a person taken along with all of his specific characteristics, can only be conceived of as an individual, which is to say that he can only be conscious of himself as an individual. But the concept of an individual is an entirely reciprocal concept:[4] "I am such and such," which is to say, "I am *not* some particular other thing," and the former means no more than the latter. Furthermore, real men are possible only insofar as they are associated with others like themselves. No man exists in isolation. The concept of an individual postulates the concept of his species. In my book *Foundations of Natural Right* (Jena, 1796), I have deduced this conclusion from transcendental principles.[5]

[3]A Danish translation of these lectures was published in 1796 and included several new "remarks" which the translator had solicited from Fichte. The translation is based on Hans Schulz's German translation of the "remarks" to the Danish edition.

[4]"Wechselbegriff." In the *Grundlage des Naturrechts* Fichte explains that a "reciprocal concept" "is one which can only be thought of in connection with another thought; it is a concept which is thereby conditioned in respect to its form by another thought, and indeed by the *very same* thought" (*SW,* III: 47; *AA* I, 3: 354).

[5]*Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre.*

For a clear, distinct, and complete insight into this vocation (though not, of course, for a feeling of it), philosophy in its entirety—and moreover a well-grounded and exhaustive philosophy—is presupposed. Yet the vocation of man as such is the subject of my lecture for today. You can see that, unless I intend to treat philosophy in its entirety within this hour, I will be unable to deduce what I have to say on this topic completely and from its foundations. What I can do is to build upon your feelings. At the same time you can see that the *last* task of all philosophical inquiry is to answer that question which I wish to answer in these public lectures: What is the vocation of the scholar? or (which amounts to the same thing, as will become evident later), What is the vocation of the highest and truest man? And you can see as well that the *first* task of all philosophical inquiry is to answer the question What is the vocation of man as such? I intend to establish the answer to this latter question in my private lectures.[6] All I wish to do today is to indicate briefly the answer to this question—to which I now turn.

The question concerning what the genuinely spiritual element in man, the pure I, might be like, considered simply in itself, isolated and apart from any relation to anything outside of itself, is an unanswerable question, and taken precisely it includes a self-contradiction. It is certainly
VI,295 not true that the pure I is a product of the not-I (which is my name for everything which is thought to exist outside of the I, everything which is distinguished from the I and opposed to it). The assertion that the pure I is a product of the not-I expresses a transcendental materialism which is completely contrary to reason. However, it certainly is true (and, at the appropriate place, will be strictly demonstrated) that the I is never conscious of itself nor able to become conscious of itself, except as something empirically determined—which necessarily presupposes something outside of the I. Even a person's body (which he calls "his" body) is something apart from the I. Yet apart from this connection with a body he would not be a person at all, but would be something quite inconceivable (if one can still refer to a thing which is not even conceivable as "something"). Thus neither here nor anywhere else does the expression "man considered in himself and in isolation" mean man considered as a pure I and apart from all relationship to anything at all apart from his pure I. Instead, this expression means merely man conceived of apart from all relationship to rational beings like himself.

What is man's vocation when he is conceived of in this manner? What is there in the concept of man which pertains to him but not to the nonhumans among those beings with which we are acquainted? What

[6]I.e., the lectures subsequently published as *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*

distinguishes man from all those beings with which we are acquainted but which we do not designate as human?

I must begin with something positive, and since I cannot here begin with what is absolutely positive, that is, with the proposition "I am," I will have to propose a hypothetical proposition, one which is indelibly etched in human feeling—a proposition which is at the same time the result of all philosophy, a proposition which can be strictly demonstrated and which will be demonstrated in my private lectures. The proposition in question is the following: Just as certainly as man is rational, he is his own end, that is, he does not exist because something else should exist. Rather, he exists simply because *he* should exist. His mere existence is the ultimate purpose of his existence, or (which amounts to the same thing) it is contradictory to inquire concerning the purpose of man's existence: he is *because* he is. This quality of absolute being, of being for
VI,296 his own sake, is the characteristic feature, the determination or vocation of man, insofar as he is considered merely and solely as a rational being.

But absolute being, being purely and simply, is not all that pertains to man. Various particular determinations of this absolute being also pertain to him. It is not simply that *he is; he also is something.* He does not say merely "I am"; he adds, "I am this or that." He is a rational being insofar as he exists at all. But what is he insofar as he is something or other? This is the question we have to answer now.

To begin with, it is not because *one* exists that one is *what* one is; rather, one is what one is because *something else exists in addition to oneself.* As we have already said above and will demonstrate in the proper place, empirical self-consciousness, that is, the consciousness of any specific determination or vocation within ourselves at all, is impossible apart from the presupposition of a not-I. This not-I must affect man's passive faculty, which we call "sensibility."[7] Thus, to the extent that man is something [definite] he is a sensuous being.[8] But according to what we have already said, man is a rational being at the same time, and his reason should not be canceled by his sensibility. Reason and sensibility are supposed to coexist alongside each other. In this context the proposition "man is because he is" is transformed into the following: *man ought to be what he is simply because he is.* In other words, all that a person is ought to be related to his pure I, his mere being as an I. He ought to be all that he is simply because he is an I, and what he cannot be because he is an I, he ought not to be at all. This formula, which remains obscure, will become clear at once.

The pure I can be represented only negatively, as the opposite of the not-I. The characteristic feature of the latter is multiplicity, and thus the

[7]"Sinnlichkeit."
[8]"sinnliches Wesen."

characteristic feature of the former is complete and absolute unity. The pure I is always one and the same and is never anything different. Thus we may express the above formula as follows: Man is always supposed to be at one with himself; he should never contradict himself. Now the
VI,297 pure I cannot contradict itself, since it contains no diversity but is instead always one and the same. However, the empirical I, which is determined and determinable by external things, can contradict itself. And if the empirical I contradicts itself, this is a sure sign that it is not determined in accordance with the form of the pure I, and thus that it is not determined by itself but rather by external things. But this should not be, since man is his own end. A person ought to determine himself and not permit himself to be determined by something foreign. He ought to be what he is because this is what he wills to be and what he ought to will to be. The empirical I ought to be determined in a manner in which it could be eternally determined. Therefore, I would express the principle of morality in the formula (which I mention only in passing and for the purpose of illustration): "Act so that you could consider the maxims of your willing to be eternal laws for yourself."

The ultimate characteristic feature of all rational beings is, accordingly, absolute unity, constant self-identity, complete agreement with oneself. This absolute identity is the form of the pure I and is its only true form; or rather, in the conceivability of identity we *recognize* the expression of the pure form of the I. Any determination which can be conceived to endure forever is in accordance with the pure form of the I. This should not be understood only halfway and one-sidedly. It is not simply that the will ought always to be one with itself (though this is all that moral theory is concerned with), but rather that all of man's powers, which in themselves constitute but one power and are distinguished from each other merely in their application to different objects, should coincide in a complete identity and should harmonize with each other.

At least for the most part, however, the empirical determinations of our I do not depend upon us, but upon something external to us. The will is of course free within its own domain, that is, in the realm of objects to which, once man has become acquainted with them, it can be related. This will be demonstrated at the proper time. But feeling, as well as
VI,298 representation (which presupposes feeling), is not something free, but depends instead upon things external to the I—things whose characteristic feature is not identity at all, but rather multiplicity. If the I nevertheless ought always to be at one with itself in this respect too, then it must strive to act directly upon those very things upon which human feeling and representation depend. Man must try to modify these things. He must attempt to bring them into harmony with the pure form of the I, in order that the representation of these things, to the extent that this depends upon the properties of the things, may harmonize with

the form of the pure I. But it is not possible purely by means of the will alone to modify things in accordance with our necessary concepts of how they should be. A certain skill is also needed, a skill acquired and sharpened by practice.

Furthermore, and even more important, the unhindered influence of things upon the empirically determinable I, an influence to which we naturally entrust ourselves so long as our reason has not yet been awakened, gives a particular bent to our empirically determinable I. And since this bent is derived from things outside of us, it is impossible for it to be in harmony with the form of our pure I. Mere will is not sufficient for removing these distortions and restoring the original pure shape of our I; we require, in addition, that skill which we acquire and sharpen through practice.

The skill in question is in part the skill to suppress and eradicate those erroneous inclinations which originate in us prior to the awakening of our reason and the sense of our own spontaneity, and in part it is the skill to modify and alter external things in accordance with our concepts. The acquisition of this skill is called "culture,"[9] as is the particular degree of this skill which is acquired. Culture differs only in degree, but is susceptible of infinitely many gradations. Insofar as man is considered as a rational, sensuous creature, then culture is the ultimate and highest means to his final goal: complete harmony with himself. Insofar as man
VI,299 is considered merely as a sensuous creature, then culture is itself his ultimate goal. Sensibility ought to be cultivated: that is the highest and ultimate thing which one can propose to do with it.

The net result of all that has been said is the following: Man's ultimate and supreme goal is complete harmony with himself and—so that he can be in harmony with himself—the harmony of all external things with his own necessary, practical concepts of them (i.e., with those concepts which determine how things ought to be). Employing the terminology of the Critical Philosophy, this agreement is what Kant calls "the highest good."*[10] From what has already been said it follows that this "highest

[9]"Kultur." In Fichte's usage this term denotes the process of acquiring education or becoming cultivated. In many contexts it would be accurately rendered as "civilization."

*[Note to the Danish edition.] Expressed more clearly, it does not follow that something is a good thing for us simply because it makes us happy. Quite the reverse, something makes us happy because it was a good thing prior to us and our feeling of happiness. The chief mistake of the eudaemonic system and the most important reason why one cannot get the defenders of eudaemonism to accept the opposite view is that they completely reverse the relationship between the faculties of desire and knowledge. Since eudaemonists are generally transcendent dogmatists who think that everything which appears in the I is determined by things outside the I, they have to begin [their account of] the entire efficacy of rational beings with the impression that an [external] thing makes upon us and with our awareness of this. Whether they clearly say so or whether it remains concealed at the basis of their argument, they think that the faculty of knowledge gives us, above all, an object, and that part of the concept of this object is that it will provide a certain sort of pleasure.

good" by no means consists of two parts, but is completely unitary: the highest good is the *complete harmony of a rational being with himself.* In the case of a rational being dependent upon things outside of himself, the highest good may be conceived as twofold: as harmony between *the willing* [of such a being] and the idea of an eternally valid willing (i.e., as *ethical goodness*), or as the harmony of our willing (it should go without saying that I am here speaking of our rational willing) with *external things* (i.e., as *happiness*). And thus we may note in passing that it is not true that the desire for happiness destines man for ethical goodness. It is rather the case that the concept of happiness itself and the desire for happiness first arise from man's moral nature. Not *what makes us happy is good,* but rather, *only what is good makes us happy.* No happiness is possible apart from morality. Of course, feelings of *pleasure* are possible without morality and even in opposition to it, and in the proper place we will see why

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(They would escape from their error at once if they would only ask themselves how such knowledge [i.e., knowledge that a particular object will provide a particular pleasure] is possible.) They contend that an impulse toward an object arises only as a result of this theoretical understanding. They conclude that something is good because we have been convinced that it will make us happy.

This, however, is not the way it works, but just the reverse. What is first and foremost in man is impulse or drive.[11] And impulse demands its object in advance of any kind of knowledge and in advance of the object's existence. It simply demands something, even if what it demands does not exist at all. What can and will make us happy is determined in advance by our drives. We are happy over something we receive because it was a good thing for us before we received it. This is how all human drives, physical as well as moral, operate. I do not enjoy food and drink because I have found them to taste good on a few occasions—why should they have tasted good to me? But rather, I desire to nourish myself in a particular manner, irrespective of food and drink, and this is why they taste good to me. Similarly I can be satisfied with myself if I have told the truth, but I do not tell the truth because it provides me with this pleasure. The reverse is the case: truth is the only thing that provides this sort of satisfaction, because the moral drive demands truth in advance of any experience.

[10]In his introductory remarks to chapter 2 of "The Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason" Kant defines "the highest good" as the combination of virtue and happiness: "That virtue (as the worthiness to be happy) is the supreme condition of whatever appears to us to be desirable and thus of all our pursuit of happiness and, consequently, that it is the supreme good have been proved in the Analytic. But these truths do not imply that virtue is the entire and perfect good as the object of the faculty of desire of rational beings. For this, happiness is also required, and indeed not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself his end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which impartially regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves. For to be in need of happiness and also worthy of it and yet not to partake of it could not be in accordance with the complete volition of an omnipotent rational being, if we assume such only for the sake of the argument. Inasmuch as virtue and happiness together constitute the possession of the highest good for one person, and happiness in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy) constitutes that of a possible world, the highest good means the whole, the perfect good, wherein virtue is always the supreme good, being the condition having no condition superior to it, while happiness, though something always pleasant to him who possesses it, is not of itself absolutely good in every respect but always presupposes conduct in accordance with the moral law as its condition." *Critique of Practical Reason,* trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianpolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), pp. 114–15.

[11]"Trieb ist das erste und höchste im Menschen."

this is so. But pleasurable feelings are not happiness; indeed, they often even contradict happiness.

Man's final end is to subordinate to himself all that is irrational, to master it freely and according to his own laws. This is a final end which is completely unachievable and must always remain so—so long, that is, as
VI,300 man is to remain man and is not supposed to become God. It is part of the concept of man that his ultimate goal be unobtainable and that his path thereto be infinitely long. Thus it is not man's vocation to reach this goal. But he can and he should draw nearer to it, and his true vocation qua *man,* that is, insofar as he is a rational but finite, a sensuous but free being, lies in *endless approximation toward this goal.* Now if, as we surely can, we call this total harmony with oneself "perfection," in the highest sense of the word, then *perfection* is man's highest and unattainable goal. His vocation, however, is to *perfect himself without end.* He exists in order to become constantly better in an ethical sense, in order to make all that surrounds him better *sensuously* and—insofar as we consider him in relation to society—*ethically* as well, and thereby to make himself ever happier.

Such is man's vocation insofar as we consider him in isolation, that is, apart from any relation to rational beings like himself. We do not, however, exist in isolation; though I cannot turn today to a consideration of the general connection between rational beings, I must, nevertheless, cast a glance upon that particular association with you which I enter upon today. What I would like to help many aspiring young men to grasp clearly is that lofty vocation which I have indicated briefly to you today. It is this vocation which I would like for you to make the most deliberate aim and the most constant guide of your lives—you young men who are in turn destined to affect mankind in the strongest manner, and whose destiny it is, through teaching, action, or both—in narrower or wider circles—to pass on that education which you have received and on every side to raise our fellowmen to a higher level of culture. When I teach something to you, I am most probably teaching
VI,301 unborn millions. Some among you may be well enough disposed toward me to imagine that I sense the dignity of my own special vocation, that the highest aim of my reflections and my teaching will be to contribute toward advancing culture and elevating humanity in you and in all those with whom you come into contact, and that I consider all philosophy and science which do not aim at this goal to be worthless. If this is how you judge me, then allow me to say that you are right about my intentions. Whether or not I have the power to live up to this wish is not entirely up to me. It depends in part on circumstances beyond our control; it depends in part upon you as well—upon your attentiveness, which I hereby request; upon your own efforts, which I cheerfully count upon with

complete confidence; and upon your confidence in me, to which I commend myself and will seek by my actions to commend to you.

Second Lecture
Concerning Man's Vocation within Society

Before it can become a science and a *Wissenschaftslehre,* philosophy must answer a number of questions, questions the dogmatists, who have made up their minds about everything, have forgotten to ask, and which the skeptics have dared to raise only at the risk of being accused of irrationality or wickedness—or both at once.

I have no desire to be superficial and to treat shallowly a subject
VI,302 concerning which I believe myself to possess better-founded knowledge. Nor do I wish to conceal and pass over in silence difficulties which I see clearly. Yet it remains my fate in these public lectures to have to touch upon several of these still almost entirely untouched questions and to touch upon them without being able to treat them in an exhaustive manner. At the risk of being misunderstood or misinterpreted I will be able to provide nothing but *hints* for further reflection and *directions* toward further information concerning matters I would prefer to have treated fundamentally and exhaustively. If I suspected that among you there were many of those "popular philosophers" who resolve every difficulty easily and without any effort or reflection, merely with the aid of what they call their own "healthy common sense"—if this is what I thought, then I would seldom stand here before you without quailing.

Among the questions which philosophy has to answer we find the following two in particular, which have to be answered before, among other things, a well-founded theory of natural rights is possible. First of all, by what right does a man call a particular portion of the physical world "*his* body"? How does he come to consider this to be his body, something which belongs to his I, since it is nevertheless something completely opposed to his I? And then the second question: How does a man come to assume that there are rational beings like himself apart from him? And how does he come to recognize them, since they are certainly not immediately present to his pure self-consciousness?*

What I have to do today is to establish what the vocation of man within society is, and before this task can be achieved the preceding questions have to be answered. By "society" I mean the relationship in which

*[Note to the Danish edition.] The author has since answered both of these questions in his previously mentioned book on natural right.

rational beings stand to each other. The concept of society presupposes that there actually are rational beings apart from oneself. It also presupposes the existence of some characteristic features which permit us to distinguish these beings from all of those who are not rational and thus are not members of society. How do we arrive at this presupposition, and what are these characteristic features of rational beings? This is the initial question which I have to answer.

VI,303 Persons still unaccustomed to strict philosophical inquiry might well answer my question as follows: "Our knowledge that rational beings like ourselves exist apart from us and our knowledge of the signs which distinguish rational beings from nonrational ones have both been derived from experience." But such an answer would be superficial and unsatisfying. It would be no answer at all to *our* question, but would pertain to an altogether different one. Egoists also have these experiences to which appeal is being made, and they have still not been thoroughly refuted on that account. All that experience teaches us is that our consciousness contains *the representation* of rational beings outside of ourselves. No one disputes this and no egoist has ever denied it. What is in question is whether there is anything *beyond this representation* which corresponds to it, that is, whether rational beings exist independently of our representations of them and would exist even if we had no such representations. And in regard to this question we can learn nothing from experience, just as certainly as experience is experience, that is, the system of our representations.

The most that experience can teach is that there are effects which resemble the effects of rational causes. It cannot, however, teach us that the causes in question actually exist as rational beings in themselves. For a being in itself is no object of experience.

We ourselves first introduce such beings into experience. It is *we* who explain certain experiences by appealing to the existence of rational beings outside of ourselves. But *with what right* do we offer this explanation? The *justification* needs to be better demonstrated before we can use this explanation, for its validity depends upon such a justification and cannot be based simply upon the fact that we actually make use of such explanations. Our investigation would not be advanced a single step thereby. We are left facing the question previously raised: How do we come to assume that there are rational beings outside of us, and how do we recognize them?

VI,304 The thorough investigations of the Critical philosophers have unquestionably exhausted the theoretical realm of philosophy. All remaining questions must be answered on the basis of practical principles (a point which I mention merely for its historical interest). We must now see whether the proposed question can actually be answered from practical principles.

According to our last lecture, man's highest drive is the drive toward identity, toward complete harmony with himself, and—as a means for staying constantly in harmony with himself—toward the harmony of all external things with his own necessary concepts of them. It is not enough that his concepts *not* be *contradicted* (in which case he could be indifferent to the existence or nonexistence of objects *corresponding* to his concepts); rather [in order to achieve the harmony desired] there really ought to be something which corresponds to these concepts. All of the concepts found within the I should have an expression or counterpart in the not-I. This is the specific character of man's drive.

Man also possesses the concepts of reason and of rational action and thought. He necessarily wills, not merely to realize these concepts within himself, but to see them realized outside of him as well. One of the things that man requires is that rational beings like himself should exist outside of him.

Man cannot bring any such beings into existence, yet the concept of such beings underlies his observation of the not-I, and he expects to encounter something corresponding to this concept. The first, though merely negative, distinguishing characteristic of rationality, or at least the first one that suggests itself, is efficacy governed by concepts, that is, purposeful activity. What bears the distinguishing features of purposefulness may have a rational author, whereas that to which the concept of purposefulness is entirely inapplicable surely has no rational author. Yet this feature is ambiguous. The distinguishing characteristic of purposefulness is the harmony of multiplicity in a unity. But many types of such harmony are explicable merely by natural laws—not *me-*
VI,305 *chanical* laws, but *organic* ones certainly. In order, therefore, to be able to infer convincingly from a particular experience to its rational cause we require some feature in addition [to purposefulness]. Even in those cases where it operates purposefully, nature operates in accordance with *necessary laws*. Reason always operates *freely*. The freely achieved harmony of multiplicity in a unity would thus be a certain and nondeceptive distinguishing feature of rationality within appearances. The only question is how one can tell the difference between an effect one has experienced which occurs necessarily and one which occurs freely.

I can by no means be directly conscious of a free being outside of myself. I cannot even become conscious of freedom within me, that is, I cannot become conscious of my own freedom. For freedom in itself is the ultimate explanatory basis for all consciousness, and thus freedom itself cannot belong to the realm of consciousness. What I can become conscious of, however, is that I am conscious of no cause for a certain voluntary determination of my empirical I other than my will itself. As long as one has explained oneself properly in advance, one might well say that this very lack of any consciousness of a cause is itself a con-

sciousness of freedom—and we wish to call it such here. *In this sense* then, one can be conscious of one's own free action.

Suppose now that the manner of behavior of that substance which is presented to us through appearance is altered, altered by *our* free action (of which we are conscious in the sense just indicated), and altered so that it no longer remains explicable by *that* law in accordance with which it operated previously, but can only be explained by that law upon which *we* have based *our own* free action—a law which is quite opposed to the previous law. The only way in which we could account for the alteration in this case is by assuming that the cause of the effect in question was also rational and free. Thus there arises, to use the Kantian terminology, an
VI,306 *interaction governed by concepts,* a purposeful community. And this is what I mean by "society"—the concept of which is now completely determined.

One of man's fundamental drives is to be permitted to assume that rational beings like himself exist outside of him. He can assume this only on the condition that he enter into society (in the sense just specified) with these beings. Consequently, the social drive is one of man's fundamental drives. It is man's *destiny* to live in society; he *ought to* live in society. One who lives in isolation is not a complete human being. He contradicts his own self.

You can see how important it is not to confuse society as such with that particular, empirically conditioned type of society which we call "the state." Despite what a very great man has said, life in the state is not one of man's absolute aims.[12] The state is, instead, only a *means for establishing a perfect society,* a means which exists only under specific circumstances. Like all those human institutions which are mere means, the state aims at abolishing itself. *The goal of all government is to make government superfluous.* Though the time has certainly not yet come, nor do I know how many myriads or myriads of myriads of years it may take (here we are not at all concerned with applicability in life, but only with justifying a speculative proposition), there will certainly be a point in the a priori foreordained career of the human species when all civic bonds will become superfluous. This is that point when reason, rather than strength or cunning,

[12]This is perhaps an allusion to Kant's contention in "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View" (1784) that "the highest purpose of Nature, which is the development of all the capacities which can be achieved by mankind, is attainable only in society, and more specifically in the society with the greatest freedom. Such a society is one in which there is mutual opposition among the members, together with the most exact definition of freedom and fixing of its limits so that it may be consistent with the freedom of others. Nature demands that humankind should itself achieve this goal like all its other destined goals. Thus a society in which freedom under external laws is associated in the highest degree with irresistible power, i.e., a perfectly just civic constitution, is the highest problem Nature assigns to the human race." In *On History,* ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. 16.

will be universally recognized as the highest court of appeal. I say "be recognized" because even then men will still make mistakes and injure their fellowmen thereby. All they will then require is the goodwill to allow themselves to be convinced that they have erred* and, when they
VI,307 are convinced of this, to recant their errors and make amends for the damages. Until we have reached this point we are, speaking quite generally, not even true men.

According to what we have said, the positive distinguishing feature of society is *free interaction.* This interaction is its own end, and it operates *purely and simply* in order to operate. But when we maintain that society is its own end, we are not by any means denying that the manner in which it operates might be governed by an additional, more specific law, which establishes a more specific goal for the operation of society.

The fundamental drive was the drive to discover rational beings like ourselves, that is, *men.* The concept of man is an idealistic concept, because man's end qua man is something unachievable. Every individual has his own particular ideal of man as such. Though all of these ideals have the same content, they nevertheless differ in degree. Everyone uses his own ideal to judge those whom he recognizes as men. Owing to the fundamental human drive, everyone wishes to find that everyone else resembles this ideal. We experiment and observe the other person from every side, and when we discover him to lie *below* our ideal of man, we try to raise him to this ideal. The winner in this spiritual struggle is always the one who is the higher and the better man. Thus the *improvement of the species* has its origin within society, and thus at the same time we have discovered the vocation of all society as such. Should it appear as if the higher and better person has no influence upon the lower and uneducated person, this is partly because our own judgment deceives us. For

*[Note to the Danish edition.] But if it is impossible for either party to be convinced—which is something which may easily occur, despite the sincere intentions of each—then what is right remains in dispute, and one of the parties suffers a wrong. But what is right should never remain in dispute, for there ought not be any wrong. Beyond this [appeal to reason via the path of mutual argument] there must also be an infallible and supreme judge to whom one is duty-bound to submit oneself. And there must be positive laws, since judgment can only be passed according to law. And there must be a constitution, since this supreme judge could not be appointed except in accordance with a rule. Thus, to the extent that the state is related to human fallibility and is, in the final instance, that which puts an end to human quarreling over questions of right, then the state is completely necessary and can never cease to exist.

But to the extent that the state is related to an evil will, to the extent that it is a compulsory power, then its final aim is undoubtedly to make itself superfluous, i.e., to make all compulsion unnecessary. This is an aim which can be achieved even if goodwill and the confidence in it do not become universal. For if everyone knows on the basis of long experience that every act of injustice will surely bring misfortune and that every crime will surely be discovered and punished, then one may expect that, on grounds of prudence alone, men will not exert themselves in vain, nor will they willfully and knowingly bring harm upon themselves.

we frequently expect fruit at once, before the seed has been able to germinate and develop. And perhaps it is partly because the better person stands upon a level which is so much higher than that of the uneducated person that the two do not have enough points of mutual contact and are unable to have sufficient effect upon each other—a situation which retards culture unbelievably and the remedy for which will be indicated at the proper time. But on the whole the better person will certainly be victorious, and this is a source of reassurance and solace for
VI,308 the friend of mankind and truth when he witnesses the open war between light and darkness. The light will certainly win in the end. Admittedly, we cannot say how long this will take, but when darkness is forced to engage in public battle this is already a guarantee of impending victory. For darkness loves obscurity. When it is forced to reveal itself it has already lost.

Thus the following is the result of all of our deliberations so far: Man is destined for society. *Sociability* is one of those skills which man ought to perfect within himself in accordance with his vocation as a man, as this was developed in the previous lecture.

However much man's vocation for society as such may originate from the innermost and purest part of his nature, it is, nevertheless, merely a drive, and as such it is subordinate to the supreme law of self-harmony, that is, the ethical law. Thus the social drive must be further determined by the ethical law and brought under a fixed rule. By discovering what this rule is we discover what *man's* vocation within *society* is—which is the object of our present inquiry and of all our reflections so far.

To begin with, the law of absolute self-harmony determines the social drive *negatively:* this drive must not contradict itself. The social drive aims at *interaction, reciprocal* influence, *mutual* give and take, *mutual* passivity and activity. It does not aim at mere causality, at the sort of mere activity to which the other person would have to be related merely passively. It strives to discover *free, rational* beings outside of ourselves and to enter into community with them. It does not strive for the *subordination* characteristic of the physical world, but rather for *coordination.* If one does not permit the rational beings he seeks outside of himself to be free, then he is taking into account only their *theoretical ability,* but not their free practical rationality. Such a person does not wish to enter into society with these other free beings, but rather to *master* them as one
VI,309 masters talented beasts, and thus he places his social drive into contradiction with itself. Indeed, rather than saying that such a person places his social drive into contradiction with itself, it is far more true to say that he does not possess such a higher drive at all, that mankind has not yet developed that far in him, that it is he himself who still stands on the lower level of the half human, the level of slavery. He is not yet mature

enough to have developed his own sense of freedom and spontaneity, for if he had then he would necessarily have to wish to be surrounded by other free beings like himself. Such a person is a slave and wishes to have slaves. Rousseau has said that many a person who considers himself to be the master of others is actually more of a slave than they are.[13] He might have said, with even more accuracy, that anyone who considers himself to be a master of others is himself a slave. If such a person is not a slave in fact, it is still certain that he has a slavish soul and that he will grovel on his knees before the first strong man who subjugates him. The only person who is himself free is that person who wishes to liberate everyone around him and who—by means of a certain influence whose cause has not always been remarked—really does so. We breathe more freely under the eyes of such a person. We feel that nothing constrains, restrains, or confines us, and we feel an unaccustomed inclination to be and to do everything which is not forbidden by our own self-respect.

Man may employ mindless things as means for his ends, but not rational beings. One may not even employ rational beings as means for their own ends. One may not work upon them as one works upon dead matter or animals, that is, using them simply as a means for accomplishing one's ends without taking their freedom into account. One may not make any rational being virtuous, wise, or happy against his own will. Quite apart from the fact that the attempt to do so would be in vain and that no one can become virtuous, wise, or happy except through his own labor and effort—even apart from this fact, one ought not even wish to do this, even if it were possible or if one believed that it were; for it is wrong, and it places one into contradiction with oneself.

The law of complete, formal self-harmony also determines the social
VI,310 drive *positively,* and from this we obtain the actual vocation of man within society. All of the individuals who belong to the human race differ among themselves. There is only one thing in which they are in complete agreement: their ultimate goal—perfection. Perfection is determined in only one respect: it is totally self-identical. If all men could be perfect, if they could all achieve their highest and final goal, then they would be totally equal to each other. They would constitute but one single subject. In society, however, everyone strives to improve the others (at least according to his own concept) and to raise them to the ideal which he has formed of man. Accordingly, the ultimate and highest goal of society is the complete unity and unanimity of all of its members. But the achievement of this goal presupposes the achievement of the vocation of man as such, the achievement of absolute perfection. The former, therefore, is just as unachievable as the latter, and it remains unachievable so long as

[13] *Of the Social Contract,* Bk. I, chap. 1.

man is not supposed to cease to be man and to become God. The *final goal* of man within society is thus the complete unity of all individuals, but this is not the *vocation* of man within society.

Man can and should approximate endlessly to this goal. Such approximation to total unity and unanimity may be termed "unification."[14] The true vocation of man within society is, accordingly, unification, a unification which constantly gains in internal strength and expands its perimeter. But since the only thing on which men are or can be in agreement is their ultimate vocation, this unification is possible only through the search for perfection. We could, therefore, just as well say that our social vocation consists in the process of communal perfection, that is, perfecting ourselves by freely making use of the effect which others have on us and perfecting others by acting in turn upon them as upon free beings.

In order to fulfill this vocation and to do so ever more adequately, we
VI,311 require a skill that is acquired and increased only through culture. This skill has two aspects: the skill of *giving,* or affecting others as free beings, and the capacity for *receiving,* or for making the most of the effect which others have upon us. We will specifically discuss both of these skills at the proper place. One must make a particular effort to maintain the latter skill alongside a high degree of the former, for otherwise one remains stationary and thus regresses. Rarely is anyone so perfect that he cannot be further educated in some respect by almost anyone—perhaps concerning something that seems unimportant to him or that he has overlooked.

I am acquainted with few ideas more lofty than this idea of the way the human species works upon itself—this ceaseless living and striving, this lively give and take which is the noblest thing in which man can participate, this universal intermeshing of countless wheels whose common driving force is freedom, and the beautiful harmony which grows from this. Everyone can say: "Whoever you may be, because you bear a human face, you are still a member of this great community. No matter how countlessly many intermediaries may be involved in the transmission, I nevertheless have an effect upon you, and you have an effect upon me. No one whose face bears the stamp of reason, no matter how crude, exists for me in vain. But I am unacquainted with you, as you are with me! Still, just as it is certain that we share a common calling—to be good and to become better and better—it is equally certain that there will come a time (it may take millions or trillions of years—what is time!) when I will draw you into my sphere of influence, a time when I will benefit you too and receive benefit from you, a time when my heart will

[14] "Vereinigung."

be joined with yours by the loveliest bond of all—the bond of free, mutual give and take.[15]

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Third Lecture
Concerning the Difference between Classes within Society

We have now presented man's vocation *qua man* as well as his vocation *within society.* The scholar exists as a scholar only within the context of society. Accordingly, we could now turn to an investigation of the particular vocation within society of the scholar. However, the scholar is not merely a member of society; he is at the same time a member of a particular class within society. At least one speaks of "the learned class."[16] Whether such talk is justified is something which we will see at the proper time.

Thus our main inquiry concerning the scholar's vocation presupposes not only the two inquiries we have just completed, but also a third, an investigation of the following important question: How does the difference between the various classes of men arise in the first place? Or, what is the origin of inequality among men? Even without any preliminary investigation, we understand by the word *class* not something which originated accidentally and without any help from us, but rather something determined and arranged by free choice and for a purpose. Nature may be responsible for that *physical inequality* which arises accidentally and without our assistance, but the *inequality of classes* appears to be a moral inequality. Concerning this moral inequality the following question naturally arises: What is the justification for the existence of different classes?

Many attempts have already been made to answer this question. Some persons, proceeding from first principles derived from experience, have
VI,313 seized upon and rhapsodically enumerated the various purposes which are served by the difference between classes and the many advantages we derive from this. By this means, however, we would sooner answer any other question whatsoever than the one just raised. The *advantage* which someone derives from a particular arrangement does nothing to

[15]Compare the conclusion of this lecture with the very similar conclusion of the lecture *Concerning Human Dignity* which Fichte had delivered in Zurich a few months earlier (section II, above.)

[16]"von einem Gelehrtenstande." By *Stand* Fichte does not primarily mean to designate a social or economic class. He employs the term with something of the sense of the French term *état* or the English *estate.* As he explains a bit later in this lecture: "my class is determined by the particular skill to the development of which I freely dedicate myself."

justify it. The question raised was by no means the historical question concerning the purposes which may have led to this arrangement, but rather the moral question concerning the permissibility of making such an arrangement, whatever purposes it might have had. This question has to be answered on the basis of principles of pure reason, indeed, on the basis of principles of pure practical reason. So far as I know, no one has ever even attempted to provide such an answer. I must preface my own attempt with a few general principles from the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

All laws of reason have their foundation in the nature of our mind, but we first become empirically conscious of these laws through an experience to which they are applicable. The more often we have occasion to apply them, the more intimately they become interwoven with our own consciousness. This is how it is with *all* laws of reason, and specifically, with the laws of practical reason—laws which, unlike those of theoretical reason, do not aim at a mere *judgment,* but rather at external efficacy. These practical laws are present to consciousness in the form of *drives.* All drives have their foundation in our nature—but no more than their foundation. Every drive has to be *awakened* by experience before we can become conscious of it. Furthermore, in order for a drive to become an *inclination* and in order for its satisfaction to become a *need,* the drive in question has to be *developed* through frequently repeated experiences of the same type. Experience, however, is not dependent upon us; neither, therefore, is the awakening and the development of our own drives at all dependent upon us.

The independent not-I, considered as the basis of experience, that is, *nature,* is something manifold. Not one of its parts is totally identical to any other part (a proposition which is also affirmed by the Kantian
VI,314 philosophy and can be strictly demonstrated within that philosophy). From this it follows that nature affects the human mind in a variety of very different ways and never develops the mind's capacities and aptitudes in the same way twice. What we call "individuals," as well as their particular empirical individual nature, is determined by the different ways in which nature acts upon them. Thus we can say that no individual, with respect to his awakened and developed abilities, is completely the same as anyone else. From this there arises a physical inequality to which we have contributed nothing and which we are unable to remove by the exercise of our freedom. For before we can freely resist nature's influence upon us, we must have become conscious of our freedom and able to use it. This state, however, can be attained in no other manner except by the awakening and development of our drives—something which does not depend upon us.

The highest law of mankind and of all rational beings is the law of total self-harmony or absolute identity. But to the extent that this law becomes something positive and obtains some content by being applied

to nature, it demands that all of an individual's talents ought to be developed equally and that all of his abilities ought to be cultivated to the highest possible degree of perfection. This demand cannot be fulfilled by the mere law alone, because, according to what has just been said, its fulfillment does not depend merely upon this law, nor upon *our will* (which is, of course, determinable by this), but rather, depends upon *the free operation of nature.*

If we assume that there are several rational beings and relate this law [of self-harmony] to society, then the demand that *every person* ought to cultivate all of his talents equally contains at the same time the demand *that all of the various rational beings ought to be cultivated or educated equally.*[17] Since all talents have their foundation entirely within pure reason, they are all equal in themselves; therefore, they all ought to be cultivated to the same extent—which is what is required by this demand. Equal re-
VI,315 sults must always follow from the equal cultivation of equal talents. And thus we arrive by another route at the conclusion established in our last lecture: the final aim of all society is *the complete equality of all of its members.*

We have already shown in the previous lecture and by another route that the mere law can no more fulfill this demand [for the complete equality of all the members of society] than it can fulfill the above demand upon which this lecture is based [i.e., the demand for the equal cultivation of all of one's talents, as well as the equal cultivation of all of the members of society]. Nevertheless, the free will *ought to* and *can* strive for an ever closer approximation to this end.

This is where the efficacy of the social drive enters in. For the social drive aims at this same end and will provide the means for the endless approximation which has been demanded. Included within the social drive, or the drive to interact with other free, rational beings and to interact with them qua free, rational beings, are the following two drives: *the drive to communicate,* that is, the drive to cultivate in other persons that aspect of personality in which *we* ourselves are especially strong and, insofar as it is possible, to make everyone else equal to our own better

[17]"gleichförmig gebildet werden sollen." One of the major themes of these lectures is the nature and importance of education or culture. In exploring this theme, Fichte employs three different and closely related terms: *bilden, ausbilden,* and *kultivieren.* Though these terms have different shades of meaning in other contexts, it has not proved practically possible to indicate these differences in the translation of this lecture. The root meaning of *bilden* is "to shape" or "to form," and *Bildung* sometimes means "structure," "formation," or "formative activity." But *Bildung* more often means "development" or "education," and *bilden* means "to educate," "to develop," "to cultivate," or even "to improve," which is the sense which it usually has in these lectures. *Ausbilden,* which is also rendered here as "development" or "education," comes from a verb (*ausbilden*) which likewise means "to cultivate," "to develop," or "to educate." In this lecture anyway, Fichte seems to use the terms interchangeably and sometimes employs yet another term with a similar meaning: *kultivieren,* i.e., "to cultivate."

self; and also *the drive to receive,* that is, the drive to allow others to cultivate in us that aspect in which they are especially strong and we are especially weak. Nature's mistakes are in this way corrected by reason and freedom, and that one-sided development which nature has furnished each individual becomes the common property of the entire species. In return, the entire species cultivates the individual. On the supposition that all of the individuals who are possible under a specific set of natural conditions actually do exist, then the species will provide the individual with all the education which is possible in such circumstances. Nature develops everyone one-sidedly, but it does so at every point in which it comes into contact with any rational being. What reason does is to unify these points, thus presenting a solid and extended front to nature. In this manner reason compels nature to cultivate every talent in the species at least, since it did not wish to do so in the individual. Through these drives [to communicate and to receive], *reason* itself sees
VI,316 to the equitable distribution of the desired education among the individual members of society; and *reason* will continue to see to this, since the realm of nature does not extend this far.

Reason will see to it that every individual obtains *indirectly from the hands of society* that complete education which he could not obtain *directly* from nature. Thus from the advantages possessed by each individual, society will accumulate a common store for the free use of everyone, thereby multiplying the advantages by the number of individuals. Reason will make the individual's deficiences into a common burden and will thus infinitely reduce them. Expressed differently and in a manner which more easily lends itself to some applications: the aim of all cultivation of skill is the subordination of nature (in the sense specified) to reason and the agreement of experience (to the extent that it is independent of the laws of our faculty of representation) with our necessary practical concepts of experience. Reason is, accordingly, engaged in a constant struggle with nature, a war that can never end—so long as we are not supposed to become gods. However, nature's influence should and can become weaker and weaker, whereas reason's dominion should and can become stronger and stronger. Reason ought to gain one victory after another over nature. Perhaps an individual may struggle successfully against nature at that particular point where he comes into contact with it, although in every other aspect he is governed by nature. But society now joins together and assumes joint responsibility: what the individual could not accomplish by himself can be accomplished by the united strength of all. Of course, everyone struggles alone, but all of us share in the weakening of nature through the common struggle and in that victory over nature separately achieved by each person in his own field. Hence phys-
VI,317 ical inequality even serves to strengthen that bond that unites all men in a single body. The compulsion of our needs and the much sweeter compul-

sion to satisfy these needs binds men more closely together. In seeking to weaken the power of reason, nature succeeds only in strengthening it.

So far everything has proceeded naturally. We have shown that there are a great variety of different *personal characters,* in accordance with the various types and levels of development, but we have not yet shown that there are any distinct *classes.* We have not yet shown this because we have been unable so far to indicate *any particular free determination,* that is, any voluntary choice of a particular sort of education. One should not misunderstand or only partially understand the claim that we have been unable so far to indicate any particular free determination. The social drive as such certainly does involve freedom: it merely urges; it does not compel. One may resist and suppress this drive. Out of misanthropic egoism one can isolate himself completely and can refuse to accept anything from society, in order not to have to render anything to it. Out of crude bestiality one can overlook the freedom of society and can consider it to be subordinate to his mere caprice, because he thinks of himself as subordinate to the caprice of nature. But this does not concern us here. If we are responsive to the social drive at all, then this drive requires us to share the good that we possess with those who need it and to receive what we lack from those who have it. For this no special new determination or modification of the social drive is required—which is all that I meant to say.

The characteristic difference [between the distinction between persons and the distinction between classes, i.e., between natural and social inequality] is as follows: *Under the circumstances which have been set forth so far,* I, as an individual, surrender myself to nature for the development of any particular talent which I may have. I do so *because I must.* I do not have any choice in the matter, but involuntarily follow the guidance of nature. I accept all that nature provides, but I cannot accept what she does not wish to provide. Though I neglect no opportunity to cultivate as many aspects of my personality as possible, I create no such oppor-
VI,318 tunities at all, because I cannot do so. But if, *on the other hand,* as linguistic usage indicates, a class is something which is supposed to be freely chosen, then before *I can choose* a class—if I am to do so—I must have *previously* surrendered myself to nature. For in order to make such a choice, various drives have to have been awakened within me, and I have to have become conscious of various talents. Nevertheless, *in the choice itself* I resolve that from now on I will pay no heed to certain opportunities which nature may provide, and I will do this so that I will henceforth be able to devote all of my strength and all of my natural gifts *exclusively to developing one or more specific skills.* My class is determined by the particular skill to the development of which I freely dedicate myself.

The question arises: *Ought* I to select a particular class? Or, if I am not morally *obliged* to do so, *may* I dedicate myself solely to one particular

class, that is, to cultivating only one aspect of myself? If, as a matter of unconditional duty, I ought to choose some specific class, then it must be possible to derive from the supreme law of reason a drive which has as its object this choice of a class—in the same way in which it is possible to derive from this law a drive whose object is society as such. If I am merely permitted to choose a class, then no such drive can be derived from the law of reason, and all that can be so derived is the permission to make such a choice. In this latter case it must be possible to indicate some empirical datum which determines the will to make the actual choice which the law merely permits. Such an empirical datum would specify a merely prudential rule, but not a law. We will see how this works in the course of our investigation.

The law commands: "Cultivate all of your talents completely and equally, insofar as you are able to do so." But the law does not specify whether I should exercise these talents directly upon nature, or whether I should exercise them indirectly through community with others. This choice, accordingly, is left entirely to my own discretion. The law commands: "Subordinate nature to your aims." But the law does not say that if
VI,319 I discover that nature has already been sufficiently molded by others for some of my purposes, then I ought to mold it further for all possible human purposes. Thus the law does not prohibit me from choosing a particular class, though neither am I enjoined by it to make such a choice simply because I am not forbidden to do so. Here I find myself in the realm of free choice. I may choose a class, and in order to decide whether or not I should do so (though not in order to decide which particular class to choose—something which I will discuss on another occasion), I have to base my decision on quite different grounds than those which can be immediately derived from this law.

As matters now stand, man is born into society. He no longer encounters nature in its native state; instead, he finds it already prepared in various ways for his possible purposes. He discovers a multitude of men in various fields busily cultivating nature on every side for the use of rational beings. He discovers that many things which he would otherwise have had to do for himself have already been accomplished. He may be able to lead a very comfortable life without directly applying his own strength to nature at all, and perhaps he could attain a certain sort of perfection merely by enjoying what society has already achieved, in particular, by enjoying what society has contributed to his own cultivation. But this is not permissible. He must at least try to pay his own debt to society. He must take his place. He must at least strive in some way to improve society, which has done so much for him.

There are two ways in which he may attempt to do this: On the one hand, he can try to cultivate every aspect of nature by himself. But then it might take him his entire lifetime—and, if he had them, several life-

times—to learn what had already been accomplished by those who preceded him and what still remained to be done. Such an effort would be superfluous, and thus from the standpoint of the human species his entire life would be lost, certainly not through the fault of his evil will,
VI,320 but rather because of his lack of good sense. Or, on the other hand, he can seize upon some particular speciality—perhaps the one which for the time being he is most interested in completely exhausting and for whose cultivation he is already best prepared by nature and society—and dedicate himself exclusively to it. The cultivation of his other talents he leaves up to society, while at the same time he intends, strives, and wishes to contribute to the cultivation of society within his own speciality. In making this decision, he has selected a class, and this choice, considered in itself, is perfectly legitimate. Yet, like all free acts, this one too is subject to the ethical law, insofar as the ethical law regulates our behavior. That is, this act is subject to the categorical imperative, which I express as follows: "never will things which contradict each other." So expressed, this is a law which everyone can obey satisfactorily, since what we will depends not in the least upon nature, but only upon us.

The choice of a class is a free choice. Thus we may not compel any person to join any particular class, nor may we deny him admission to any class. Every individual action, as well as every general institution, which aims at such compulsion is illegitimate. This is so quite apart from the fact that it is stupid to compel a man to join a particular class or to bar him from another, since nobody can be totally acquainted with anyone else's special talents. A member of society who is assigned to the wrong place in this manner is often totally lost for society. Apart from this, such compulsion is wrong in itself, because it places our own action in contradiction with our practical concept of it. We desired a *member* of society, and we produce a *tool* of society. We desired a *free fellow worker* on our great project, and we produce a *coerced, passive instrument* of the same. Thus, as far as we were able, we have killed the man within the person we have treated in this manner; we have wronged him, and we have wronged society.

We selected a particular class as well as a specific talent for further
VI,321 cultivation *because we wanted to be able to repay society for all that it has done for us.* Consequently, everyone is bound actually to apply his education for the benefit of society. No one has the right to work merely for his own private enjoyment, to shut himself off from his fellowmen and to make his education useless to them; for it is precisely the labor of society which has put him in a position to acquire this education for himself. In a certain sense education is itself the product and the property of society, and thus the man who does not want to benefit society robs it of its property. Everyone has the duty not only to want to be generally useful to society, but also the duty, according to the best of his knowledge, to

bend all of his efforts toward society's final end: the constant improvement of the human species—liberating it more and more from natural compulsion, and making it ever more independent and autonomous. And thus, from this new inequality [of classes] there arises a new equality: the equitable advancement of culture in every individual.

I am not claiming that things are always actually as I have just described them. But according to our practical concepts of society and of different social classes, this is how things ought to be, and we can and should work to make them so. At the proper time we shall see how vigorously the scholarly class in particular can work toward this end and how many means to this end it has in its power.

If we only contemplate the idea just presented, even apart from all relation to ourselves, we can at least catch a glimpse beyond ourselves of an association in which one cannot work for himself without working at the same time for everyone, nor work for others without working for himself; for the successful progress of any member is the successful progress of them all, and one person's misfortune is everyone's misfortune. Simply through the harmony which it reveals in the most diverse things, this spectacle pleases us sincerely and exalts our spirit mightily.

Our interest in this spectacle only increases when we take ourselves
VI,322 into account and consider ourselves as members of this great and intimate association. Our sense of our own dignity and power increases when we say to ourselves what every one of us can say: "My existence is not in vain and without any purpose. I am a necessary link in that great chain which began at that moment when man first became fully conscious of his own existence and stretches into eternity. All these people have labored for my sake. All that were ever great, wise, or noble—those benefactors of the human race whose names I find recorded in world history, as well as the many more whose services have survived their names: I have reaped their harvest. Upon the earth on which they lived I tread in the footsteps of those who bring blessings upon all who follow them. Whenever I wish, I can assume that lofty task which they had set for themselves: the task of making our fellowmen ever wiser and happier. Where they had to stop, I can build further. I can bring nearer to completion that noble temple that they had to leave unfinished."

"But," someone may say, "I will have to stop too, just as they did." Yes! and this is the loftiest thought of all: Once I assume this lofty task I will never complete it. Therefore, just as surely as it is my vocation to assume this task, I can never cease *to act* and thus I can never cease *to be.* That which is called "death" cannot interrupt my work; for my work must be completed, and it can never be completed in any amount of time. Consequently, my existence has no temporal limits: I am eternal. When I assumed this great task I laid hold of eternity at the same time. I lift my head boldly to the threatening stony heights, to the roaring

cataract, and to the crashing clouds in their fire-red sea. "I am eternal!" I shout to them, "I defy your power! Rain everything down upon me! You earth, and you, heaven, mingle all of your elements in wild tumult. Foam
VI,323 and roar, and in savage combat pulverize the last dust mote of that body which I call my own. Along with its own unyielding project, my will shall hover boldly and indifferently above the wreckage of the universe. For I have seized my vocation, and it is more permanent than you. It is eternal, and so too am I!"

Fourth Lecture
Concerning the Scholar's Vocation

I must speak to you today about the vocation of the scholar.

I find that I am in a peculiar situation in regard to this subject. For all of you, or at least most of you, have chosen the sciences as your life's work, and so have I. Presumably, you devote your entire energies to the goal of being respected members of the scholarly class, and so have and so do I. I am thus supposed to speak as a scholar before prospective scholars on the subject of the scholar's vocation. I am supposed to examine this subject thoroughly and, if possible, exhaustively—omitting from my presentation nothing which is true. Suppose that I should discover that the vocation of this class is a very honorable and lofty one, more distinguished than that of any other class: how can I say this without being immodest, without depreciating the other classes, and without seeming to be blinded by conceit? Yet I am speaking as a philosopher, and as such I am obliged to specify precisely the meaning of every concept. So what can I do if the concept which comes next in the series happens to be the concept of the scholar? It is impermissible for me to suppress anything which I recognize to be true: it remains true in any
VI,324 case. Even modesty is subordinate to truth, and it is a false modesty which stands in the way of the truth. For the time being let us investigate our subject impartially, as if it had no relation to ourselves and were a concept borrowed from a world totally alien to us. Let us demand all the more precision in our proofs. And let us not forget something which I intend to present with no less force in its proper place: that every class is necessary and deserves our respect, that an individual's merit is not determined by the class to which he belongs, but rather by the way he fulfills his role as a member of that class. For every person deserves to be honored only insofar as he approximates to fulfilling his role completely. For this reason, the scholar has reason to be the humblest person of all: since the goal which is set for him must always remain very distant,

and since he has to achieve a very lofty ideal—one from which he normally remains very distant.

We have seen that men possess various drives and talents and that the vocation of every individual is to cultivate all of his talents to the best of his ability. One of man's drives is the social drive. This drive offers man a new, special type of education, that is, education for society, as well as an extraordinary facility for education as such. It is up to each person to decide whether he shall cultivate all of his talents immediately within nature or whether he shall cultivate them indirectly through society. The first course is difficult and does nothing to advance society; therefore, within society every individual quite legitimately selects his own special branch of general education, leaving the other branches to his fellow members of society in the expectation that they will share the benefits of *their* education with *him,* just as he will share the benefits of *his* with *them.* This is the origin of and the justification for the difference between the various classes within society.

Such were the results of my previous lectures. A classification of the various classes according to pure concepts of reason (which is entirely
VI,325 possible) would have to be based upon an exhaustive enumeration of all of man's natural talents and needs—not counting those needs which are purely artificial. A specific class can be dedicated to the cultivation of each specific talent or—which amounts to the same thing—to the satisfaction of each of man's natural needs (i.e., each need which has its origin in a basic human drive). We will reserve this investigation for some future time in order to devote this hour to a topic which lies nearer to us.

If someone were to ask about the relative perfection of a society organized according to the above first principles (and as our investigation of the origin of society has made clear, every society, in accordance with man's natural drives, is organized in this way by itself and without any guidance), then in order to answer this question we would first have to investigate the following question: Are *all* needs cared for in the society in question? Are they all developed and satisfied, and are they developed and satisfied *equally?* If they are, then the society in question is perfect qua society. This does not mean that it would attain its goal (which, according to our previous deliberations is impossible), but rather that it would be so organized that it would necessarily have to *approximate* more and more closely to its goal. If all needs are not equally cared for in this manner, then it would of course remain possible for the society in question to make cultural progress through a fortunate accident. This, however, could not be counted on with any certainty; the society might just as well regress through an unfortunate accident.

The first presupposition for seeing to the equal development of all of man's talents is an acquaintance with all of his talents: a scientific knowl-

edge of all of his drives and needs, a complete survey of his entire nature. Yet such complete knowledge of man in his totality is something which is itself based upon a talent, one which must itself be developed. Man certainly has a drive to *know*, in particular, he has a drive to know
VI,326 his own needs. The development of this drive, however, requires all of one's time and energy. If there is any common need which urgently demands that a special class of persons be dedicated to its satisfaction, it is this one.

But the *acquaintance* with man's talents and needs would be an extremely sad and depressing thing without the scientific knowledge of how to *develop* and *satisfy* them. It would also be something empty and quite useless. It is most unkind of someone to show me my shortcomings without at the same time showing me the means by which I may overcome them, or to produce within me a sense of my own needs without putting me in a position to satisfy them. It would be far better for him to leave me in my state of animal ignorance. In short, such knowledge could not be the sort which society desires and for the sake of which society requires a special class possessing such knowledge; for such knowledge does not have the aim it is supposed to have, namely, the improvement, and thereby the unification, of the species. Accordingly, this knowledge of men's needs must be joined with a knowledge of the *means for satisfying them.* Both sorts of knowledge are the business of the same class, because neither sort of knowledge can be complete, much less efficacious and vigorous, without the other. Knowledge of the first sort is based on principles of pure reason; it is *philosophical* knowledge. Knowledge of the second sort is partly based on experience; to that extent it is *philosophical-historical* knowledge (not merely historical knowledge, since before I can evaluate as means to ends the objects given in experience, I must first be acquainted with the ends to which these objects refer, and such ends can only be recognized philosophically). The knowledge in question is supposed to be useful to society. It is, therefore, not enough merely to know what talents man has and the means for developing them. Such knowledge would still always remain
VI,327 entirely fruitless. In order to obtain the desired utility, an additional step is required: one must know the particular cultural level of one's society at a particular time, as well as the particular level it has to reach next and the means it has to employ to do so. Using reason alone and assuming only the existence of experience as such, one can certainly determine in advance of any particular experience the course which the human species will follow. One can specify in an approximate manner the various steps it has to climb in order to reach a particular stage of development. One cannot, however, determine the level of a particular society at a particular time solely on the basis of reason. For this one has to examine experience as well. One has to study the events of former ages, albeit

with an eye purified by philosophy. One must look around oneself and observe one's contemporaries. The last element in the knowledge which society requires is thus purely *historical.*

Taken together (and if they are not, they are of much less use) the three types of knowledge just indicated constitute what is—or at least should be—called "learning"; the person who dedicates his life to the acquisition of such knowledge is called a "scholar."

Every individual scholar does not have to master the entire field of human knowledge in all three of these respects. Such total mastery would be for the most part impossible, and just for this reason the attempt to gain it would be fruitless and would lead to the waste, without any gain for society, of a person's entire life—a life which could have been useful to society. Individuals may stake out for themselves individual portions of the domain of knowledge, but in his own area each person should cultivate all three: philosophical and philosophical-historical, as well as purely historical knowledge. In saying this, I wish to indicate in a merely provisional manner something which I will discuss
VI,328 more fully at a later time. I wish to assert here (on my own testimony at least) that the study of a properly grounded philosophy does not make it superfluous to acquire empirical knowledge—not, at least, if such knowledge is thorough. On the contrary, such a philosophy demonstrates in the most convincing manner the indispensibility of empirical knowledge. We have already shown that the purpose of all human knowledge is to see to the equal, continuous, and progressive development of all human talents. It follows from this that the true vocation of the scholarly class is the *supreme supervision of the actual progress of the human race in general and the unceasing promotion of this progress.* Only with great effort do I here restrain my feelings from being carried away by the lofty idea which is now before us, but the path of cold investigation is not yet at an end. Yet I must at least mention in passing what it is that those who attempt to hinder the advance of science would actually do. (I say "*would* do," for how can I know whether there really are any such persons?) The whole progress of the human race depends directly upon the progress of science. Whoever retards the latter also retards the former. And what public image does the person who retards the progress of mankind present to his age and to posterity? With actions louder than a thousand words, he screams into the deafened ears of his own and later ages: "So long as I am alive, at least, my fellowmen shall become no wiser and no better. For if mankind were to advance, then, despite all my resistance, I too would be forced to advance at least in some respect, and this I abhor. I do not wish to become more enlightened or ennobled. My element is darkness and perversity, and I will summon up my last ounce of strength in order to keep from being budged from this element." Mankind can dispense with, can be robbed of, everything without risk of

losing its true dignity—it can dispense with everything, that is, except for the possibility of improvement. Like that foe of mankind whom the
VI,329 Bible depicts, these misanthropes have deliberated and calculated coldly and cunningly; they have explored the most sacred depths in order to choose where mankind has to be attacked in order to be nipped in the bud. They have found the spot. With indignation mankind turns away from the spectacle presented by such persons, and we return to our inquiry.

Science itself is only one branch of human development—every branch of which must be advanced if all of man's talents are to be further cultivated. Hence, like every person who has chosen a particular class, every scholar strives to advance science, specifically, that area of science which he has chosen. He has to do what everyone has to do in his special area, and he has to do far more than this. He is supposed to supervise and promote the progress of the other classes, but is he himself *not* supposed to make any progress? The progress of all of the other special areas of development depends upon the progress of the scholar. He must always proceed in advance of the other areas in order to clear and explore the path and then to guide them along it, but is he himself supposed to stay behind? From that moment he would cease to be what he is supposed to be, and thus—since he is nothing else but this—he would be nothing at all. I am not saying that every scholar *actually has to advance* his own area; perhaps he cannot do so. But I am saying that every scholar must *strive* to do so, and that he may not rest or believe himself to have discharged his duty until he has advanced his area of science. And so long as he lives he can continue to advance it further. If he is overtaken by death before he has achieved his purpose then he is of course released from his duty within this world of appearances, and his sincere attempt will be counted as his accomplishment would have been. If the following rule applies to all men, it applies especially to the scholar: he ought to forget his accomplishments as soon as they are completed and he always ought to think only of what he still has to accomplish. The person whose field is not enlarged with every step that he takes has not yet advanced very far.

VI,330 The scholar is especially destined for society. More than any other class, his class, insofar as he is a scholar, properly exists only through and for society. Accordingly, it is his particular duty to cultivate to the highest degree within himself the social talents of *receptivity* and the *art of communication.* If he has acquired the appropriate empirical knowledge in the appropriate manner, then his receptivity should already be highly cultivated. He should be familiar with his scientific predecessors. And this familiarity cannot have been produced merely by rational reflection, but has to have been learned through oral or written instruction. By constantly learning something new he should preserve his receptivity

and try to guard against that total lack of openness to foreign opinions and ways of thinking which one often encounters, occasionally even among excellent and independent thinkers. For no one is so well instructed that he could not always learn something new and occasionally something very essential, and seldom is anyone so ignorant that he could not tell even the most knowledgeable man something new. The scholar always needs skills of communication, since he does not possess his knowledge for himself, but rather for society. He has to practice this art from childhood and has to preserve it in all of his activities. At the proper time we will examine *the means by which* he does this.

The scholar should now actually apply for the benefit of society that knowledge which he has acquired for society. He should awaken in men a feeling for their true needs and should acquaint them with the means for satisfying these needs. This does not imply that all men have to be made acquainted with those profound inquiries which the scholar himself has to undertake in order to find something certain and sure. For that would mean he would have to make all men scholars to the same extent that he himself is a scholar, and this is neither possible nor appropriate. Other things also have to be done, and this is why there are other
VI,331 classes of men. If these others were to devote their time to scholarly investigations, then even the scholars would soon have to cease being scholars. But then how can and how should the scholar disseminate his knowledge? Society could not continue to exist without trust in the integrity and the ability of others, and accordingly, this trust is deeply etched in our hearts. Moreover, we are especially favored by nature in that our trust is the greatest precisely in those areas in which we are most dependent upon the integrity and ability of others. Once he has acquired it as he should, the scholar may count on this trust in his integrity and ability. In addition, all men have a sense for what is true. By itself, of course, this sense is not sufficient. It has to be developed, scrutinized, and purified, and this is precisely the scholar's task.[18] Such a sense or feeling for truth is not sufficient to lead the uneducated person to all the truths that he needs; but, unless it has been artifically falsified (something which is often done by persons who think of themselves as scholars), it is always enough to permit him to recognize the truth after another has guided him to it—even if he does not see the deeper reasons why it is true. Likewise, the scholar may rely upon this sense of truth. To the extent that we have developed the concept of the scholar so far, we can say that it is the vocation of the scholar to be the *teacher* of the human race.

But the scholar does not merely have to make men generally ac-

[18]This "feeling" or "sense of truth" (*Wahrheitsgefühl*) is further explored in several of the later (unpublished) lectures in this series. See below, Sections V and VI.

quainted with their needs and the means for satisfying them. He has to direct their attention to the needs which confront them under the specific circumstances inherent in each particular time and place, as well as the specific means for achieving each purpose as it arises. He does not look only at the present; he looks toward the future as well. He does not see only the present standpoint; he also sees the direction in which the human race must now proceed if it is to continue on the path toward its final goal and is not to stray from this path or go backward on it. He cannot demand that the human race proceed at once to that point which
VI,332 shines before his eyes. No step along this path can be skipped. The scholar simply has to see to it that we do not remain standing in one place or turn back. In this respect the scholar is the *educator* of mankind. I wish to mention explicitly at this point that when engaged in this activity, as in all of his occupations, the scholar is subject to the ethical law, which commands harmony with oneself. The scholar exercises an influence upon society. Society is based upon the concept of freedom; it and all of its members are free. Thus the scholar may employ none but moral means to influence society. He will not be tempted to use *compulsory means* or physical force to get men to accept his convictions. In our era one should not have to waste any further words on such folly. But neither should the scholar employ *deception.* Quite apart from the fact that in doing so he would wrong himself and that his duty as a person would in any case be higher than his duty as a scholar, he would wrong society at the same time. For every individual in society ought to act on the basis of free choice and on the basis of a conviction which *he himself has judged adequate.* In each of his actions he ought to be able to think of himself as an end and ought to be treated as such by every other member of society. A person who is deceived is being treated as a mere means to an end.

The final aim of every individual person, as well as of society as a whole, and thus the final aim of all of the scholar's work for society, is the ethical improvement of the whole person. It is the scholar's duty always to keep this final aim in view and to have it before his eyes in all that he does within society. But no one who is not himself a good man can work successfully for ethical improvement. We do not teach by words alone; we also teach—far more forcefully—by example. Everyone who lives in society owes it to society to set a good example, because the power of example originates only through our life in society. How much greater is
VI,333 the scholar's obligation to set a good example—the scholar, who is supposed to surpass the other classes in every aspect of culture! How can he think that others will follow his teachings if he contradicts them before everyone's eyes in every action of his life? (The words addressed by the founder of Christianity to his followers apply quite aptly to the scholars:

"Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?"[19] When the elect among men have been corrupted, where should one search to find ethical goodness?) Considered, therefore, in this last respect, the scholar ought to be the *ethically best* man of his time. He ought to represent the highest level of ethical cultivation which is possible up to the present.

This is the vocation we have in common, the fate we share. It is a happy fate to have a particular calling which requires one to do just that which one has to do for the sake of one's general calling as a human being. It is a happy fate to be required to apply one's time and energy only to something for which one would otherwise have to make time and save up energy with prudent economy. And it is a happy fate to have for one's work, one's business, one's own daily task, something which for other persons is a pleasant relaxation from labor. Here is an invigorating thought, one which elevates the soul and which each of you who is worthy of his vocation can have: "Within my special area the culture of my age and of future ages is entrusted to me. My labors will help determine the course of future generations and the history of nations still to come. I am called to testify to the truth. My life and destiny do not matter at all, but infinitely much depends upon the results of my life. I am a priest of truth. I am in its pay, and thus I have committed myself to do, to risk, and to suffer anything for its sake. If I should be pursued
VI,334 and hated for the truth's sake, or if I should die in its service, what more would I have done than what I simply had to do?"

I realize how much I have now said and realize equally well that an emasculated age which has lost its nerve cannot endure this feeling and cannot bear to have it expressed. And I realize that, with a timorous voice which betrays its inner shame, such an age will call anything to which it cannot rise "muddled enthusiasm."[20] Anxiously, it will avert its gaze from a picture in which it sees only its own enervation and shame, and something strong and elevated will make no more impression upon such an age than a touch makes upon those who are crippled in every limb. I know all this, but I also know where I am speaking. I am speaking before an audience of young men whose very age protects them from such utter enervation. I would like to provide you with a manly ethical theory, and at the same time and by means of this, I would like to place in your soul feelings which will protect you against such enervation in the future. I frankly admit that I would like to use this position in which providence has placed me in order to disseminate a more manly way of thinking, a stronger sense of elevation and dignity, and a more intense

[19]Matt. 5:13.

[20]"Schwärmerei." This fairly common term is the bane of translators. If it were not so anachronistic one might well translate it here as "romantic nonsense."

desire to fulfill one's vocation despite every danger. I would like to broadcast this in every direction, as far as the German language extends and even farther if I could. This I would like to do, so that after you have left this place and have scattered in all directions I could know that in all those places you are scattered there live men whose chosen friend is truth: men who will cling to truth in life and in death; men who will provide a refuge for truth when all the world thrusts it out; men who will publicly defend the truth when it is slandered and maligned; men who will gladly suffer the cleverly concealed hatred of the great, the insipid smiles of the conceited, and the pitying shrugs of the narrow-minded—all for the sake of truth. This is why I said what I have said, and this will remain my ultimate object in saying all that I will ever say to you.

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Fifth Lecture
An Examination of Rousseau's Claims concerning the Influence on Human Welfare of the Arts and Sciences

It is of no special value *for the discovery of the truth* to combat those errors which oppose it. If the truth is arrived at by correct inferences from the proper first principle, then everything which contradicts it must necessarily be false, and no explicit refutation is necessary. Thus when one surveys the entire path that he had to follow in order to arrive at some particular knowledge, one can easily glimpse the side roads which branch off from this path and lead toward various errors. One will then be in a position from which one can easily show everyone who has gone astray the point at which he did so. This follows from the fact that every truth can be deduced from only one first principle. A thoroughgoing *Wissenschaftslehre* has to show *what this* first principle is for every specific problem. General logic prescribes how additional inferences are to be made from this first principle. If this is done then it is easy to discover the true path as well as the false one.

However, reference to opposing opinions is of great value for the *clear and distinct presentation* of a truth which has already been discovered. By comparing truth with error, one is forced to attend more closely to the distinguishing features of each and to conceive of them more specifically and clearly. I am going to utilize this method today in order to provide a brief and clear overview of what I have presented so far in these lectures.

I have said that man's vocation consists in the constant advancement of
VI,336 culture and in the equal and continuous development of all of man's talents and needs. I have assigned a very honorable place within human

society to the class which is to supervise the progress and uniformity of this development.

No one has contradicted this truth more specifically, with more apparent reason, and with greater eloquence than Rousseau, according to whom cultural advancement is the sole cause of all human corruption.[21] According to Rousseau, man's only salvation lies in the state of nature, and furthermore (as follows quite correctly from his first principles), that class of men which does the most to promote the advance of culture, that is, the class of scholars, is the source as well as the center of all human misery and corruption.

This theory was advanced by a man who had cultivated his own intellectual capacities to an extremely high degree. He used all the superior strength provided by his excellent education to convince mankind wherever possible of the correctness of his claim and to persuade men to return to that state of nature which he extolled. In his view return is progress, and the forsaken state of nature is the ultimate goal which must finally be attained by mankind, which is presently corrupted and miseducated. Accordingly, Rousseau did just what we are doing: he labored in his own manner to advance mankind and to promote human progress toward the ultimate goal. That is, he did exactly what he so bitterly criticized; his actions stand in contradiction to his first principles.

This same contradiction reigns in Rousseau's first principles. What is it that drove him to act except some impulse of his own heart? Had he investigated this drive and placed it alongside the one that led him into error, then there would have been unity and agreement, both in his manner of acting and at the same time in his manner of inferring. If we can resolve the first contradiction [viz., the contradiction between Rousseau's actions and principles] then we will have resolved the second one [viz., the contradiction contained within his own first principles] as well.
VI,337 The point which resolves the first is at the same time the one which resolves the second. We wish to discover this point and will resolve the contradiction. We will thus come to understand Rousseau better than he understood himself and will then find him to be in complete agreement with himself and with us.

How might Rousseau have arrived at this remarkable proposition—a proposition which, though partially affirmed by others before him, is one which, when universally applied, completely contradicts the ordinary view? Did he reach it through argument, through inference from a higher first principle? Certainly not. Rousseau never penetrated by any path to the foundation of all human knowledge. He appears never to

[21]Though there are no specific quotations from Rousseau in this entire lecture, nor any references to any specific texts, the work Fichte appears to have in mind is the "First Discourse" (see the editor's preface, above).

have even raised the question of such a foundation. What is true for Rousseau is what is based directly upon his feelings. Therefore, his knowledge has the defects of all knowledge based on mere, undeveloped feeling: that is, it is *uncertain* (because one can never give a complete account of one's feelings), and *what is true* is mixed with *what is untrue* (because a judgment based on undeveloped feeling always asserts the equivalence of things which are not equivalent). That is to say, *feeling* never errs, but the *power of judgment* does, insofar as it interprets feelings incorrectly and takes a mixed feeling for a pure one. Rousseau always draws correct inferences from the undeveloped feelings on which he bases his reflections. Once he enters the region of syllogisms he is at one with himself, and thus the reader who is able to think along with him is irresistably swept along as well. Had he permitted his feeling to have an influence upon the course of his deductions, this would have returned him to the correct path, from which feeling itself first led him astray. In order to have erred less he would have to have been either a more or a less acute thinker than he was. Similarly, in order not to be misled by Rousseau, one must possess either a very high or a very low degree of acumen. One must either be a very thorough thinker or else be no thinker at all.

Isolated from the larger world and guided by his own pure feeling
VI,338 and his lively imagination, Rousseau had framed for himself an image of the world, and, in particular, of the scholarly class with whose works he was mainly concerned [not as they actually are, but] as they would necessarily have to be if they were guided by the same feeling [which guided Rousseau]. Then he entered the larger world and looked at what surrounded him. How must he have felt when he saw the world and the scholars as they really are! He saw, raised to a frightening height, what anyone who uses his eyes can see all around him: men groveling in the dust like beasts, chained to the earth, without any notion of their high dignity or of the divine spark within them. He saw that their joys and their sorrows as well as their entire destiny depended upon the gratification of their base sensuousness, whose needs nevertheless increased painfully with every gratification. He saw how they paid no heed to right or wrong, holy or unholy, in gratifying this base sensuousness. He saw that they were always prepared to sacrifice all mankind to the first passing whim, and that they had finally lost any sense of right and wrong and thought that wisdom was skill at obtaining one's own advantage and that duty was the satisfaction of one's own desires. Finally, he saw how they prided themselves on this infamy and gloried in this degradation, how they looked down contemptuously upon those who were not *so* wise or *so* virtuous as they themselves. He witnessed a spectacle which we can now see in Germany too, namely, that those who were supposed to be the nation's teachers and educators had sunk to becoming the complaisant

slaves of their own corruption, and that those who should have set a tone of wisdom and seriousness for their age were turning an attentive ear to the tone of the reigning folly and vice. Concerning the direction of their inquiries, he heard them ask not, "Is this good and does it promote goodness and nobility?" but rather, "Do people want to hear this?": not, "What will mankind gain from this?" but rather, "What will *I* gain from it? How much money will I make? From which prince will this earn a
VI,339 favorable nod? Which beautiful woman will smile?" He also saw how they prided themselves on this way of thinking and how they shrugged their shoulders sympathetically over those fools less accomplished than themselves at sensing the spirit of the age. He saw talent, art, and knowledge united for the miserable purpose of extorting a still more refined pleasure from nerves jaded with every pleasure or for the detestable purpose of excusing and justifying human depravity, of exalting corruption into a virtue and completely demolishing anything still standing in its way. Finally he saw, and through his own unpleasant experience became acquainted with, those disgraceful persons who have sunk so low that they have lost the last vestige of their suspicion that any truth at all exists, as well as their remaining awe before truth. He saw that such persons had become entirely incapable of dealing with reasons, and that when anyone still demanded that they do so, they replied: "Enough! It is not true, and we do not want it to be true, since there is nothing in it for us." He saw all of this, and his highly demanding, and hence disappointed, feelings rebelled. With deep indignation he chastised his age.

Let us not blame him for this sensitivity; it is the sign of a noble soul. Anyone who feels the divine within himself will often be tempted to complain to Eternal Providence: "These then are my brothers! These are the companions you have sent to accompany me along the path of earthly life! Yes, they bear my face, but our hearts and minds are not related. My words sound to them like words in a foreign language, as theirs do to me. I hear the sounds of their voices, but there is nothing in my heart which can make sense of these sounds. Oh, Eternal Providence, why did you cause me to be born among such men? Or, if I was supposed to be born among them, why did you give me this sensitivity and this driving presentiment of something better and higher? Why did you not make me like them? Why did you not make me as base as they are? Then I would have been able to live happily among them." It is easy for
VI,340 you to chide his misery and to criticize his dissatisfaction, you who are satisfied with anything. It is easy for you to recommend to him the contentment which allows you to put up with anything, and the modesty which lets you accept men as they are. If he had had as little thirst as you have for what is noble, he would have been as modest as you are. Since you are unable to imagine a better state of affairs, everything really is good enough for you.

In the welter of bitter feelings in which he was caught, Rousseau was incapable of seeing anything except the object which had aroused these feelings. Sensuousness reigned; that was the source of the evil. The primacy of sensuousness was the one thing he wanted to be abolished, whatever the risk and cost. Is it any wonder that he fell into the opposite extreme? Sensuousness should not rule, but it certainly cannot rule if it is killed, if it does not exist at all, or if it has not been developed and has not become at all strong: hence Rousseau's "state of nature."

In Rousseau's state of nature, man's distinctive talents shall not only not be cultivated, there shall be no hint of them. Man shall have no needs other than those of his animal nature. He shall live like the beasts surrounding him on the meadow. It is true that in such circumstances none of those vices which so offended Rousseau's sensibility would be able to take root: man will eat when he is hungry and drink when he is thirsty—and will be satisfied with the first thing he comes across. When he is full he will have no interest in robbing others of nourishment for which he himself has no need. Once he is full, everyone else can eat whatever and as much as they wish right in front of him, for what *he* needs now is simply rest, and he has no time to disturb others. The truly characteristic feature of man lies in his outlook on the future, which is at the same time the source of all human vice. Cut off the source and there will be no more vice. Rousseau, in his state of nature, really did cut off this source.

It is, however, also true that, just as surely as man is man and not an
VI,341 animal, it is not his destiny to remain in this condition. Admittedly, in such a state of nature vice would be abolished—along, however, with virtue and reason as such. Man would become an irrational beast. There would be a new animal species, but there would no longer be any men.

Rousseau was undoubtedly honest with men: he himself really did long to live in that state of nature which he commended so warmly to others. This longing is certainly apparent in all of his assertions. We might ask, "What was Rousseau really looking for in this state of nature?" He felt himself limited and burdened by various needs, which often diverted him from the path of probity and virtue (for ordinary men this is, of course, a very minor nuisance, but it weighs most heavily upon a man like Rousseau). He thought that if he lived in the state of nature he would not have all of these needs and would thus be spared the many pains caused by letting them go unsatisfied as well as the many even more bitter pains caused by satisfying them dishonorably, and he would then remain at peace *with himself*. In every situation he found himself pressed upon by other people because he stood in the way of the satisfaction of their needs. Rousseau believed that mankind is not evil for no reason and to no purpose, and we agree with him on this. None of those persons who injured Rousseau would have done so had they not felt certain needs. Thus, if all the people around him had been living in the state of nature,

then he would have remained at peace *with others*. Was it then undisturbed inner and outer peace which Rousseau desired? Yes indeed, but now let us ask further how he proposed to use this undisturbed peace. Without any doubt, the answer is that he wished to use this peace in the same manner in which he actually used that measure of peace which was actually granted him, that is, to reflect on his vocation and his duties, in order thereby to improve himself and his fellowmen. But how could he have done this in that animal condition which he assumed? How could he
VI,342 have done it without the preceding education, which he would be able to obtain only within a state of culture? Thus, without realizing it, he transplanted himself and society as a whole into the state of nature *along with all of that cultivation which could not have been obtained except by emerging from the natural state*. Without noticing it, he assumed that mankind had already emerged from the state of nature and had traversed the entire path of development—and yet, at that same time, had not emerged from the state of nature and had received no education. Thus we have arrived at Rousseau's unnoticed faulty inference, and now we can resolve his paradox completely and easily.

Rousseau did not wish to send man back to the state of nature in respect to spiritual cultivation, but merely in respect to independence from sensual needs. The conduct of man's outer life must require less and less energy and care. The soil will become more fertile, and the climate will become milder. Countless new discoveries and inventions will maintain life by increasingly diverse and easy means. Furthermore, as reason expands its dominion, man will constantly need less—not, as in the rude state of nature, because he is unfamiliar with these amenities, but because he can dispense with them. He will always be prepared to relish the enjoyment of what is best—when to do so does not conflict with his duty. He will also be prepared to forego anything that he cannot honorably have. Idealistically conceived (in which respect it is, like everything idealistic, unachievable), the state of nature is that golden age of sensuous pleasure without physical labor which the ancient poets describe. Thus what Rousseau and the ancient poets placed *behind* us,
VI,343 under the names "state of nature" and "golden age," lies *ahead* of us instead. (In passing we should note that it is a frequent phenomenon everywhere, especially in ancient times, to portray what we ought to *become* as something that we have already *been*. What we have to achieve is represented as something which we have lost. A good reason for this phenomenon can be found within human nature, which I will explain on an appropriate occasion.)

What Rousseau forgot is that mankind can and should approach this condition only through care, effort, and labor. Nature is rude and wild apart from the hand of man, and this is how it should be in order that man will be compelled to emerge from his passive natural state and to

cultivate nature—in order to transform himself from a mere product of nature into a free, rational being. Man certainly does leave the state of nature. He will risk anything to pluck the apple of knowledge, for the drive to be equal to God is ineradicably implanted in him. The first step beyond the state of nature leads man into misery and hardship. His needs develop; insistently, they demand to be satisfied. Man, however, like the matter of which he is made, is naturally lazy and indolent. Hence the hard struggle between need and indolence begins. The former is the victor, but the latter complains bitterly. By the sweat of his brow man cultivates his field, and he is angered when it also bears thorns and thistles which he has to uproot. Need is not the mother of vice; need is the impetus toward activity and virtue. The source of vice is laziness. *To enjoy just as much pleasure as possible and to do just as little as possible:* this is the concern of a corrupted nature. The various attempts to accomplish this constitute the vices of such a nature. There is no salvation for man until he successfully conquers his natural indolence and finds all of his joy and his pleasure in activity alone. This is the purpose served by all of that agony which accompanies the feeling of need. It should spur us into action.

VI,344 This is the object of all pain; it is, in particular, the object of that pain we experience when we see the imperfection, the corruption, and the misery of our fellowmen. Anyone insensitive to this pain and this bitter indignation is a base person. Anyone who feels it should try to free himself from it by striving to the limit of his abilities to improve things in and around his sphere of influence. Even if his labors should bear no fruit, and even if he should be unable to see any benefits that they might have produced, he will still be distracted from his sorrow by the feeling that he is at least doing something. And he will be distracted as well by the strength which he has displayed in the fight against universal corruption. This is where Rousseau erred. He possessed energy, but more for suffering than for acting. He felt strongly the misery of men, but he felt much less strongly his own power to remedy this. He judged *others* according to the way he *himself* felt. He thought that all men have the same relationship to their common suffering that he had to his special suffering. He took into account the suffering, but not that strength to help themselves which men possess within themselves.

Peace be to his ashes and blessed be his memory! He made a difference! He kindled a fire in the souls of many who have continued what he began. He acted, but he had almost no consciousness of his own spontaneity. He had an influence, but he did not call upon others to do likewise, nor did he weigh the influence of their actions against the sum of our common evil and corruption. His entire system of ideas is governed by this deficient striving for spontaneity. He was a man of passive sensibility, without also being a man capable on his own of actively resist-

ing its influence. The lovers depicted by Rousseau become virtuous, but they merely *become* so, and we are unable to see quite *how* this happens. He conceals from our view the most interesting and instructive thing of all: the struggle between reason and passion and the gradual, slow victo-
VI,345 ry which the former achieves by means of exertion, effort, and labor. The pupil Rousseau depicts develops all by himself. His teacher does no more than remove obstacles to his education; otherwise, benevolent nature is allowed to prevail. From now on nature must always keep the pupil under her protection, for the teacher has not furnished him with the enterprise, fire, and firm resolve to fight against and to subjugate nature. Among good persons such a pupil will be well off, but he will suffer unspeakably among bad ones—and where are most people not bad? Thus Rousseau consistently depicts reason *at peace* but not *in battle.* Instead of strengthening reason, he *weakens sensuouness.*

I embarked upon this inquiry in order to resolve that notorious paradox which conflicted directly with our first principle. But this was not my sole purpose. At the same time I wished to show you, through the example of one of our century's greatest men, how you should not be. I wanted to furnish you with a lesson valid for your entire life. You are in the process of learning by means of philosophical inquiry how men should be, though you have not yet entered into any intimate, close, and indissoluble relationship with men. You will enter into such relationships, and you will find that men are quite different from what is prescribed by your ethical theory. The nobler and better you are, the more painful this future experience is going to be. Do not allow yourself to be overcome by this pain; instead, overcome it through deeds. This pain has a purpose. It is part of the plan for improving the human race. It is womanish to stand there and complain about human corruption without lifting a finger to diminish it. It is unkind to censure men and to mock them bitterly without telling them how they can improve. Act! Act! That is what we are here for. Should we complain that others are not as perfect as we are, as long as we ourselves are only more perfect than they
VI,346 are? Isn't our greater perfection precisely this calling we have received to work for the improvement of others. Let us rejoice over the prospect of the immense field that is ours to cultivate! Let us rejoice because we feel our own strength and because our task is endless!

V

Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy

Editor's Preface

The three lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" belong to the series of public lectures "Morality for Scholars" which Fichte delivered during his first semester at Jena. The first five lectures in this series were published in 1794 as *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation,*[1] but none of the subsequent lectures in the series was published by Fichte himself, although one appeared in 1797 without the author's knowledge or permission.[2] The entire series of public lectures for the summer semester of 1794 included at least six, and perhaps as many as eight, lectures in addition to the published ones. Though these texts were not included in the edition of Fichte's collected published and unpublished works edited by his son, manuscript copies of three of these unpublished lectures survived and were finally edited and published by Siegfried Berger in 1924 under the title *Ueber den Unterschied des Geistes und des Buchstabens in der Philosophie* (not to be confused with the similarly titled essay "A Series of Letters

[1]For an account of the circumstances under which these first five lectures were published, see the editor's preface to Section IV, above.

[2]Fichte included a transcription of the text to the concluding public lecture of the summer series as an appendix to the "report" he submitted to the university senate, which was investigating the controversy stirred up by his decision to give his public lectures during the winter semester on Sunday mornings. (For an account of this controversy, see the editor's introduction.) Both the report and the transcript of the lecture were subsequently—and rather mysteriously—published in the "first installment" (1797) of the anonymously edited *Blättern aus dem Archiv der Toleranz und Intoleranz,* where the lecture was incorrectly identified as "Die am Ende des Winters 1794. von Fichten gehaltene Schlussvorlesung als Beylage der Verantwortung." This text is reprinted in *Von den Pflichten der Gelehrten: Jenaer Vorlesungen, 1794–95,* pp. 89–101. For the surviving portion of the original manuscript, see *AA* II, 3: 345–53. The last two lectures in the series formed the basis for Fichte's essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth." For more information see the editor's preface to Section VI, below.

concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy," which Fichte published a few years later).[3]

Although the three lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" are interesting documents in their own right, they should be interpreted within the context of the entire series of which they form a part. What was the place of these three lectures within the series? They definitely belong to the summer series, but the summary of previous lectures with which they begin indicates that several no longer extant lectures intervened between the final lecture "Concerning the Scholar's Vocation" and the first "Spirit and Letter" lecture. Nor did the series end with the final "Spirit and Letter" lecture, as is evidenced by the surviving text of Fichte's "concluding lecture" in the summer series. Thus we can conjecturally reconstruct the entire series of weekly public lectures "Morality for Scholars," which began on Friday evening, May 23, 1794, and concluded at the end of August, as follows:

1–5. The five lectures "Concerning the Scholar's Vocation," which were published by Fichte himself at the end of the semester

6–7(?). One or more missing lectures[4]

8–10. The three unpublished lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and Letter within Philosophy"

[3]*Ueber Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie: In einer Reihe von Briefen,* in *SW,* VIII: 270–300 (*AA* I, 6: 333–61). English translation by Elizabeth Rubenstein, "On the Spirit and the Letter in Philosophy," in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Hegel,* ed. David Simpson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 74–93. Fichte originally prepared the three "Letters" in 1795 as the first part of a never completed series he originally wrote for publication in Schiller's newly founded journal, *Die Horen.* To Fichte's stunned astonishment, however, Schiller rejected the "Letters," thereby initiating a permanent rupture between the two erstwhile friends. (See Fichte's bitter letter of June 27, 1795, written in reply to Schiller's rejection of his manuscript. Translated below, Section X, no. 15.) Though Fichte never wrote the promised "continuation" of the series, the first three letters were eventually published in two installments at the beginning of 1800 in his own journal, the *Philosophisches Journal.* For an account of the celebrated literary quarrel between Fichte and Schiller, see Günter Schulz, "Die erste Fassung von Fichtes Abhandlung 'Über Geist und Buchstab in der Philosophie: In einer Reihe von Briefen,' 1795. Ein Beitrag zum Verhältnis Fichte-Schiller." *Goethe: Neue Folge des Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 17(1955): 114–41. See too Reinhard Lauth's introduction to *Von den Pflichten der Gelehrten: Jenaer Vorlesungen 1794–95,* pp. xxx-li.

The published text, "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy," is *not* a revised version of the earlier lectures; indeed, the title notwithstanding, these three "Letters" do not deal explicitly with philosophy at all. Instead, they are devoted entirely to an investigation of art and the "aesthetic drive"—topics not even mentioned in the lectures.

[4]On the evidence of Fichte's various summaries of their contents, these missing lectures dealt with the following issues: the need for the scholar to know what human perfection consists in and how to progress toward it; the need to learn this through the study of philosophy; the prejudices one must overcome before one can study philosophy; and the relation of philosophy to ordinary life.

11(?). At least one missing lecture[5]

12. The "concluding lecture," which was published in an unauthorized form in 1797

The three "Spirit and Letter" lectures came at a crucial point in the overall series. In previous lectures Fichte had presented a general account of the vocation of man and of man's vocation in society, as well as a more detailed description of the scholar's specific vocation. This led to a general discussion of science and culture and a consideration of what sorts of knowledge the scholar should be expected to master. In a no longer surviving lecture, Fichte had argued that philosophical knowledge should be a special concern of the scholar and had begun a general account of the study of philosophy. The lecture that immediately preceded the first "Spirit and Letter" lecture dealt with various prejudices against the study of philosophy, as well as with the problematic relationship between philosophy and ordinary life. Here the three lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" take up the thread of the argument. In these lectures Fichte addresses the task of explaining what philosophy really is, as well as the related task of clarifying "the rules for studying philosophy."

The general thesis of all three lectures is that philosophy is not a matter of mere "results" and thus is not something one can learn by rote. Philosophy is essentially an activity, something one has to *do*—and has to do for oneself. As Fichte puts it in the conclusion to the second lecture: "Philosophy is not something that floats in our memory or is printed in books for us to read; instead, philosophy is what has stirred and transformed our spirit and has ushered it into a higher, spiritual order of things. Philosophy is something which has to exist within us. It must be our entire being; it must be the whole education of our spirit and heart." Not that philosophy is unable to yield positive results or "truths," but such results cannot be separated from the process by which they have been achieved. Separating the conclusions from the inquiry by which they have been obtained results in a "literal" or formulaic approach to philosophy, an approach that betrays an utter absence of "spirit." But philosophy without "spirit" is not philosophy at all.

The meaning of "spirit" in this context is the subject of the first lecture, "Concerning the Spirit and the Body as Such." Fichte made frequent use of the familiar distinction between "the spirit" and "the let-

[5]Since one of the two lectures Fichte summarized in his essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" was the concluding lecture in the series, and since none of the other surviving lectures from the series deals with the topic of this essay, one must assume that at least one lecture intervened between the final "Spirit and Letter" lecture and the surviving "Concluding Lecture." Presumably too, the topic of at least one of these missing lectures was the "truth drive."

ter," for example, in his insistence that his own system was true to "the spirit" if not to "the letter" of Kant's Critical Philosophy. But as the title of this first lecture, with its parallel contrast between "spirit" and "body," reveals, he also wished to give a more specific and somewhat technical sense to the familiar, biblically derived distinction between the spirit and the letter.[6] Specifically, he wished to relate this distinction to a general theory of man as a "spiritual" being and to transcendental philosophy in particular, understood as "the systematic history of the human spirit's universal modes of acting." Hence, in the first lecture he identifies spirit with "productive imagination" or "a capacity for raising feelings to consciousness." Since feelings are presumed to lie at the basis of all representations, "spirit" in this sense is a necessary ingredient in all consciousness. But in addition to those common feelings which relate to our animal existence, human beings have other, higher sorts of feelings. Feelings of this sort are related to our rational and moral (i.e., "spiritual") nature. And to raise these feelings to consciousness in the form of ideas and ideals one requires "spirit" in a higher sense of the term. Thus Fichte recognizes different senses of "spirit." In a certain sense all men are equally "spiritual," and in another sense they are not. But they must all be at least capable of developing within themselves this higher form of spirit as well. This raises the problem of communication between spiritual beings, who, like ourselves, require that spirit always have a physical embodiment. This in turn suggests still another sense of "spirit": spirit as the ability to express one's ideas, that is, to give them physical embodiment, and the closely related capacity to receive ideas, to recognize the spirit in the body.

In the second lecture, Fichte applies his account of spirit to philosophy, to show that here too imagination and spirit are absolutely indispensible. But the case of philosophy is rather special. For not only does the pursuit of philosophy require the application of spirit, it also (unlike the other sciences, which also require the application of spirit) has spirit (or "mind")[7] as its object of inquiry. This leads to what is perhaps the most interesting section of the entire series of lectures: an account of how one should set about the task of "doing philosophy" and an explanation of how spirit can and must be employed to comprehend spirit. The main task of the second lecture is thus to determine the peculiar character of philosophical self-consciousness. In pursuing this important and difficult subject, Fichte provides an extraordinarily lucid account of

[6]See, for example, Rom. 2:29 and 7:6, and 2 Cor. 3:6.

[7]The reader of these English translations must remember that "mind" and "spirit" are both used to translate the German word *Geist*. Though it would be desirable to use a single English word to render this important term, this is unfortunately not practically possible. In most contexts *Geist* can be satisfactorily rendered as "spirit," but there are other contexts in which any translation other than "mind" would be seriously misleading.

"the very essence of transcendental philosophy, namely, that it does not directly engage in representing, but rather in representing the *process of representation* itself." But since we cannot represent to ourselves the actions of our own mind without forming an image (*Bild*) of them, we must employ our creative power to form images, that is, our imagination (*Einbildungskraft*). Hence philosophy, the study of spirit, can be pursued only by spiritual means. In addition to the more sustained account of the activity of philosophical reflection and abstraction, the second lecture also includes some brief but illuminating remarks on the "pure I" (as "that from which one simply cannot abstract") and the "intellectual intuition" upon which such a thought must necessarily be based. The lecture concludes with a consideration of the "far-reaching" and salubrious consequences such an intuition must have for one's practical attitudes as well as for one's theoretical position.

Philosophy requires the application of spirit in the specific form of reflection and abstraction, but for such application the imagination must be rigorously disciplined. What is the source of those rules of abstraction and reflection which govern our activity as philosophers? This is the first topic addressed in the final "Spirit and Letter" lecture. Such rules must correspond to the "laws" governing the human mind, the very same laws we are trying to discover. But does this notion not imply that the entire philosophical enterprise involves a fundamental circularity? Yes, is Fichte's surprising answer to this question: "It is clear that the very possibility of engaging in such reflection already presupposes just what is supposed to be discovered, namely, it presupposes those laws according to which our mind acts and the hierarchical relation of these laws to each other." Nor could we ever hope to escape this circle if we were no more than thinking beings. But fortunately we possess another spiritual capacity in addition to our understanding or capacity to think. We also possess "reason in the narrow sense," and the way in which we become aware of this is through the presence in ourselves of an obscure but crucially important drive or impulse. We escape the circle described above only because our inquiries are guided by a "feeling" or "sense of truth," thanks to which we have "a presentiment that something may be found in a particular place and that one should pursue this or that path in order to find out." Of course this feeling may very well turn out to have been wrong, but without it we could never have begun our inquiries at all. But here as usual Fichte is quick to add: though our knowledge must begin with feeling, feeling is not enough. The philosopher must make the free decision to raise this feeling to consciousness. And thus he must concern himself with the issue (treated by Fichte in the final lectures of the "Morality for Scholars" series) of how this feeling of truth can be cultivated.

Finally, the philosopher requires "spirit" in still another sense of the

term. Such spirit is revealed by a lively sense of the whole, and not just by a concern with individual problems or parts of an investigation. The philosopher must always bear in mind the connection between his particular inquiries and the larger whole, which ultimately means that he must never lose sight of the connection between his technical pursuits and those "truths which are the foundation of human morality and comfort." And this feeling for the whole can, in turn, be acquired only "by transforming philosophy into oneself and making its spirit one's own."

The three lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" are of obvious interest to students of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre.* Indeed, the lectures deserve to be included, along with *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and its two introductions of 1797, among the small number of works in which Fichte philosophizes about his own philosophizing. Employing the term in the sense in which Fichte himself employs it in *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* they are contributions to the "critique" of philosophy rather than to "philosophy" itself. But there is a larger and more important sense in which the entire series of popular lectures of which these lectures are only a part can be said to "occupy a key position in Fichte's philosophical system."[8] As long as one is acquainted only with the first five lectures in the series, it is easy to overlook the systematic role of these "popular lectures." But when the "Spirit and Letter" lectures are taken into consideration, it becomes clearer what Fichte was actually trying to accomplish in this series and why in later years he would return again and again to this same topic as the theme for his public lectures.[9]

As noted at the beginning of the first lecture in the entire series ("Concerning the Vocation of Man as Such"), the issues and questions dealt with in the lectures "Morality for Scholars" are really the same ones treated in a more technical fashion in the *Wissenschaftslehre.* The difference is that in these popular lectures the author is not able to demonstrate his conclusions by deriving them from first principles, but is instead forced to "build upon the feelings" of his audience. In fact, this entire series of lectures constitutes an admirable popular introduction to philosophy in general and to the *Wissenschaftslehre* in particular, in as

[8]Reinhard Lauth, "J. G. Fichtes Gesamtidee der Philosophie," in *Zur Idee der Transzendentalphilosophie* (Munich: Anton Pustet, 1965), p. 75. This essay includes a detailed investigation of the systematic role that Fichte's public lectures on the scholarly life were intended to play in his overall "ideal plan" for presenting his philosophy. See too Lauth's introduction to *Von den Pflichten der Gelehrten: Jenaer Vorlesungen, 1794–95,* pp. li–liii. For another perspective on the same set of lectures, see Baumanns, *Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre,* pp. 100–111.

[9]In addition to the Jena lectures with which we are here concerned, Fichte prepared at least two more, completely different, series of lectures on "the scholar's vocation": first at Erlangen in 1805 ("Ueber das Wesen des Gelehrten, und seine Erscheinungen im Gebiete der Freiheit," in *SW,* VI: 349–447) and later in Berlin in 1811 ("Fünf Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten," in *SW,* XI: 145–208).

much as such topics as the nature of philosophy as such, its relationship to the other sciences and to ordinary life, the special character of philosophical reflection, and the rules governing the same are discussed in the texts of the lectures. They are "introductory" in another sense as well. Insofar as they succeed in overcoming common prejudices against philosophy and in convincing students that the study of philosophy is no mere intellectual luxury, but instead makes a vital contribution to human development, these lectures serve to awaken in their listeners and readers a new and pressing *need* for philosophy. But there is still another no less important, though perhaps less obvious, way in which these lectures are meant to serve as an introduction to Fichte's system. Fichte believed that philosophy must begin with a clear affirmation of freedom, that is, that an adequate philosophical system had to start with a first principle in which is expressed the unconditioned self-positing of the pure I. There is, of course, an obvious sense in which an "unconditional" starting point requires no presuppositions and thus admits of no "introduction" at all. But in another sense, transcendental philosophizing does indeed presuppose something quite specific, namely, a more or less clear awareness of one's own freedom. Before one can "make philosophy one's own," one must accomplish within oneself that act of pure self-positing with which philosophy begins. A major purpose of these lectures is to show that and to describe how one can become aware of one's own freedom in the course of ordinary human life and to relate this sense of freedom to the more abstract declaration of freedom with which philosophy must begin. Thus one might say that these lectures provide an essential introduction to philosophy, that they establish the "subjective conditions" for the possibility of philosophy, and that they accomplish this by describing human freedom and rousing listeners and readers to a new and more lively sense of their own freedom—thereby preparing them for entry into the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

The text of *Ueber den Unterschied des Geistes und des Buchstabens in der Philosophie* upon which the translation is based and to which the page numbers in the margins refer is the first edition, edited by Siegfried Berger (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1924). A critical edition of this same text may be found in *AA* II, 3: 315–42. Some very minor differences, mainly consisting of slightly different paragraphing, exist between Berger's text and the version in *AA*. Any significant changes have been incorporated into the translation.

Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy

First Lecture
Concerning the Spirit and the Body as Such

Along with other sorts of knowledge, a scholar should also have a certain acquaintance with philosophy. This is the point we have now reached [in this series of lectures] and on which we would like to dwell for a while. I wished to dispose of the dominant prejudices which might turn you against the thorough study of philosophy, and I wished, in a general way, to provide you with the means for acquiring a complete knowledge of this science. In the last lecture[1] I sought to invalidate a common prejudice against philosophy, namely, the view that philosophy is of absolutely no use and that one can manage very well without those profound and hairsplitting inquiries in which modern philosophy in particular engages and must engage. I showed that one can indeed manage the ordinary business of earthly life without engaging in such inquiries, and that without engaging in them one can still be an excellent business machine. But I also showed that—given the situation which now prevails among the higher classes of men—it would be difficult to be considered a rational, free, and suprasensuous being without engaging in such inquiries. I intended to touch on and to correct many other antiphilosophical prejudices, but I find that I can attack and destroy them all by attacking and destroying their common root. By reflecting

[1]No copy of the "last lecture" to which Fichte refers has survived. For a discussion of the place of these three lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy" in the larger series of public lectures on "Morality for Scholars," see the editor's preface, above.

with you *upon the distinction between the spirit and the letter within philosophy,* I think that I can fairly well cover all the rules for studying philosophy—if, that is, I can succeed in making this distinction clear and palpable for you. This task seems to me to be all the more necessary on account of the decisive tendency away from spirit[2] which is characteristic of our age and because, in philosophy especially, spiritless literalists, employing the only type of wit of which literalists are capable (i.e., wordplay and innuendo), have shamelessly and boldly begun to mock the spirit and to proclaim rather loudly their candid opinion that spirit has no place in philosophy at all.

Today I will speak about the general distinction between the spirit and the letter (or the body). I will try to make you understand what I mean by *spirit* as such, considered as a property characteristic of a rational sensuous being. And I will try to indicate to you what characterizes spirit and spiritlessness as such.

Spirit as such is what is otherwise called *productive imagination. Reproductive* imagination repeats something which was already present within empirical consciousness, though it does not repeat it in exactly the *same* context in which it first appeared within consciousness. Reproductive imagination is also able to assemble a new whole by combining various other ones, but, strictly speaking, it still remains merely reproductive. Productive imagination does not repeat anything; it is, at least from the point of view of empirical consciousness, completely creative—and it creates something from nothing. (I realize that I am here deviating from the opinion characteristic of even recent modern philosophy—unless one has correctly understood the hints given by the most brilliant thinker of all, i.e., Kant.[3] Nevertheless, I am not saying anything which I could not—and at the proper time will—prove. But, of course, all I can do at this point is make the assertion, leaving it to those who are lacking in spirit to find such an assertion fatuous.) As I was saying, the productive imagination creates the material for representation: it alone shapes everything that is found within empirical consciousness and is the creator of this consciousness itself. But even in regard to its productive power, the imagination is still no thing in itself; instead, it is a capacity or faculty of the only immediately given thing in itself—the I. Accordingly, even the creative power of the I must have a higher basis within the I, or, expressed differently and in a way more appropriate to our inquiry: though the productive imagination may be for consciousness a creator,

[2]"Hang zur Geistlosigkeit." Concerning the translation of *Geist* as "mind" as well as "spirit," see note 7 to the editor's preface.

[3]"einige Winke des geistvollsten unter den Denkern, Kants." For Kant's contrast between "reproductive" and "productive" imagination, see the "Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding" in the *Critique of Pure Reason.*

3 for the I as such it can only be a shaper,[4] and what it shapes must be found within the I.

This is in fact the case. That which the imagination shapes and presents to consciousness is found in feeling.[5] Feeling, which I neither can nor should explain at this point, is the material of everything which is represented. Thus spirit as such, or productive imagination, may be described as a *capacity for raising feelings to consciousness.*

Anyone who has any representations [i.e., anyone who is conscious of anything] possesses spirit in this most general sense of the term, since no representation originates in any manner other than the one just indicated. Thus all human beings possess spirit, and to be utterly without spirit means to be unconscious or dead. Spirit and life are one and the same, and only the lifeless are absolutely without spirit.

What then can one mean by ascribing spirit preeminently to one person and calling another person "spiritless"? To begin with, it appears that the distinction thereby drawn is not a positive and absolutely posited distinction, but is merely a relative one—merely a distinction of degree between one man and another. And indeed, this is what it is. The more rapidly and actively a man's imagination is able to convert his feelings into representations, and thus the more forcefully representations crowd in upon each other in his mind,[6] the more spirit he possesses. The more slowly he is able to understand and comprehend things, and the more dully the thread of his consciousness unwinds, the less spirit he has.

Nevertheless, a higher distinction can still be detected: one which, admittedly, involves no razor-sharp boundary, but which does at least involve a boundary between two classes of men distinguished (though not with perfect sharpness) in regard to their spirit or lack of spirit. The distinction is the following: All men have feelings, and in all men some of these feelings are given a shape by the productive imagination and raised to consciousness. But there is a great difference among these feelings themselves. Some feelings relate merely to man's animal nature. Feelings of this sort do not lie very deep, and these are the feelings which are most easily, surely, and necessarily raised to consciousness—not, to be sure, qua feelings (which is not what we are talking about here), but rather qua representations. Other feelings lie at the foundation of those feelings which relate merely to a sensuous world of appearances governed by laws of nature. These other feelings are not related to man's
4 merely animal life, but rather to his rational and spiritual life. Rather

[4]"Bildnerin." Note the connection between this term and the term for "imagination": *Einbildungskraft.* The root meaning of *Bild* is "image," "picture," or "figure." The ordinary meaning of *Bildnerin* is "sculptor."

[5]"im Gefühl."

[6]"in seinem Geist."

than being related to the mere ordering of appearances in accordance with laws of nature, these other feelings relate to the subordination of appearances and of all rational spiritual beings to the laws of the ethical order, the laws governing spiritual harmony and the unification of everything in one realm of truth and virtue. If I may so express myself, these feelings lie in a deeper region of our spirit, in its most secret sanctuary. Before one can reach this more exalted spiritual life, one must traverse the world of appearances, and one's sensibility must wither away. If feelings of the first sort designate and comprise the realm of concepts, then these of the second sort establish the field of Ideas and ideals. Anyone who has reached this latter region may be said to "be a spirit" and to "possess spirit" in the higher sense of the term. One may describe spirit, in this sense, as a capacity for raising ideas to consciousness, a capacity for representing ideals. In contrast, lack of spirit would be described as an incapacity for representing ideals—an incapacity which has unfortunately always been found among men, though never before to the degree and the extent that it can be found in our enervated age and in our nations enervated by slavery, luxury, and a smug belief in their own vaunted knowledge.

Anyone who surveys the realm of the human mind scientifically, anyone who really penetrates to the innermost and most secret depths of the human spirit and does not, as it were, continue to hang on to the empty, dead letters: such a person possesses spirit, and, as we shall see at the proper time, he elevates his spirit. But this is not the only way in which spirit may be obtained. One may possess a great deal of spirit and still not be able to describe it scientifically or to explain the origin within man of that which we call spirit. From anywhere whatsoever—from somewhere invisible to you and to all mortal eyes—a spark reaches you. You are overwhelmed by it and led into your own most secret depths, without knowing how you got there. Such was the situation of the great men of antiquity of whom I spoke in my last lecture: in a manner which neither they nor their contemporaries could explain, they hit upon those lofty Ideas which they handed down to us and which, if we were capable of grasping them, would astound us.

5 The following are the most universal forms of those ideas in the representation of which spirit manifests itself: Spirit lifts itself beyond the necessary forms of spatial bodies and delineates in its freedom the idea of "primal beauty," to which nothing in the material world is equivalent. It lifts itself beyond the temporal flux of sensations and delineates the idea of "the delightful," in which sensations crowd in upon one another without appearing to be altered thereby. It lifts itself above the spatial and temporal limitations of sensation and sweeps beyond time and space to stare in wonder at the "primal sublime." Beyond the change of convic-

tions, spirit lifts itself to the feeling of "eternal truth," and beyond every influence of sensibility it ascends to the loftiest idea of all—the idea of completely presented ethical perfection, the idea of "divinity."

Everything that occurs for us happens within the physical world, and that includes a sensuous being's spiritual ideas. The free spirit is clothed in a body.

As I have already described in more detail in these lectures, man has an irresistable impulse to want to assume that there exist beings outside of but like himself.[7] A person who possesses spirit is robbed of his finest pleasure when he has no one with whom to share his pleasure. But the only means that such a person has for communicating with other beings possessing spirit is provided by the physical world. Spirits are unable to affect each other immediately. They are free and cannot *be* determined; instead, they have to determine *themselves* according to the example of some appearance in the material world. In order to be able to enter into a reciprocal relationship with other persons, the man of spirit must produce outside of himself an appearance which expresses his spiritual idea (to the extent that the body can be an expression of the spirit). This is what he does when it is said, for example, that he is the embodiment of spirit.

What he presents is a presentation of spirit only for those who possess spirit themselves. For the lifeless, everything lacks life; for those without spirit, everything lacks spirit. The above-mentioned person did not want to affect the other person's spirit, nor could he do so even if it were permissible. All he wanted to do was to enter into reciprocal interaction with the other person. By means of his bodily presentation he only wished to provide the other person with an occasion for developing through his own activity those spiritual Ideas which dwell within him. Of course, this achievement is something that is fashioned by spirit, but it is
6 not spirit itself. The author of the presentation takes back the spirit, and all that remains is the dead body. It is up to the onlooker to inspire this body with the breath of life.

To furnish an example: This is just the situation in which I find myself with you at this and every moment. I set before you a product, into which I believe I have breathed a few Ideas. But I do not give you the ideas themselves, nor can I do so. I give you the mere body. The words which you hear constitute this body. Taken in themselves, my words are no more than an empty noise, a movement in the air which surrounds us. I do not give them whatever meaning they have *for you* (assuming that they make rational sense to you). You place a meaning in these words *for yourself,* just as I place a meaning in them *for myself.* The more

[7]See the second lecture of *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation,* above, Section IV.

closely the meaning you place in them approximates to the meaning I wished to place in them, the better you understand me; the further your meaning is from mine, the less you understand me. The closer the Ideas that you develop within yourself on this occasion resemble those Ideas that I developed in myself while engaged in this activity, the better your frame of mind will harmonize with mine.

In the human species, spirit constantly develops by means of this struggle of one spirit with another. Thus the whole species becomes richer in spirit. In the first crude attempt [at spiritual communication] the spirit of future ages is already preparing itself. With this help it is able to develop further than those who made the original attempt and will pass on a more perfect presentation, to be further improved by those who follow, who will in turn pass on an even more perfect one.

In the earliest recorded ages mankind had already progressed a long way in this spiritual development. You can ascertain the present level of this progress simply by looking around you, and as your own self-development proceeds you will be able to see it even more perfectly. Any historian who knows his business can tell you what has detained mankind on the path to its goal. It was despotism, which is the declared enemy of all that is good, beautiful, or noble, the declared enemy of God and mankind. With its heavy fist, despotism destroyed freedom, which is the mother of the spirit. For the moment, however, let us leave despotism standing over the ruins of downtrodden humanity while we continue along our path.

7 To the amazement and joy of everyone who possessed spirit, the presentation of spiritual Ideas actually did occur and was loudly praised. To be the author or creator of such a presentation brought one fame and perhaps profit as well—the true motive of men lacking in spirit. Of course, among the crowd there were some who could not very well comprehend what was so great and praiseworthy about this, but such persons liked fame and profit. And precisely because they saw merely the body and not the spirit, they thought to themselves, "it is easy to produce something like that." So they noted the relation of the parts to the whole [within the accomplished presentation of spirit], and then they set to work. Wood or stone could be found anywhere. Working vigorously, they completed their project and probably thought that they had accomplished the same thing that had been accomplished by the person they were copying; moreover, since there are always plenty of people everywhere lacking in spirit, other persons shared this opinion of their work. Pygmalion showed the people his masterpiece, a statue to which he had imparted life, breath, warmth, heartbeat, and control of its limbs.[8] What prevents us from completing this fable and ascribing to this

[8]For the story of Pygmalion, see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X.243–522.

statue the magical power of remaining dead in the eyes of anyone who does not share in the life of the spirit? Along comes an honest craftsman who knows how to use a chisel too. Hearing the cheers of the delighted connoisseurs, he takes a look and what does he see? A statue like any other. Thinking to himself, "if that is all it takes to become famous, then I want to become famous at once," he grabs his compass and ruler and measures and figures out the proportions. Proceeding in this way he sets to work, finishes the job, and thinks that he has reproduced Pygmalion's achievement. And the man is right, for he has indeed reproduced what Pygmalion's achievement was *for him.*

Spirit obtains its rules from within itself. It needs no law; it is a law unto itself. The person without spirit obtains his rules from without; he is able to do nothing but copy. He cannot do anything unless someone tells him how to do it. The man without spirit and the man who is rich in spirit follow the same rule, but there is an enormous difference in the way they do this. The latter acts according to the rule and as if it were no rule. And it really is no rule for him; it is nature. The person without spirit acts according to the rule, but in a manner which always allows one
8 to see the rule, as well as to see his anxious observance of it. He is a student who, with every stroke of his pen, glances back at the model he is copying. And even if he makes every stroke exactly as it appears on the model, one can still see from the lack of unity and facility in his strokes, from their timorousness, and from a certain something which one cannot always account for, that he is no more than a student and that handwriting is not yet something natural for him.[9]

Almost every human activity can be accomplished with spirit. A lack of spirit betrays itself in almost all of them as well.

One is human only insofar and only to the degree that one possesses spirit. One works advantageously for the development of humanity only insofar as one possesses spirit. If mankind is ever to be improved, to be set upon the path toward its goal, and then to advance vigorously along this path, this will only happen if the leaders and educators of mankind possess spirit.

You are familiar with the standpoint from which I view the scholars. The standpoint from which I view you, my audience, is not something which you have to learn for the first time in these lectures. You do not have to learn here that I glimpse in you the hope of future generations and that I see in you a foreshortened picture of future ages. Thus I do not need to assure you of the warmth and vivacity of the wish with which I conclude today's lecture: the wish that, unnoticed by me, a great deal of

[9]At this point *AA* prints what is identified as Fichte's marginal note (and is not included in Berger's edition): "Do not appear to overlook the fact that this presentation possesses great advantages and value in its own right."

spirit may be found among you, and that from time to time I can succeed in scattering in your souls fiery sparks which will arouse and stir them.

Second Lecture
Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter

In order—to the best of my ability—to remove the numerous prejudices standing between you and a thorough study of philosophy and, at the same time, in order to share with you my own thoughts concerning how to organize such a program of study, I proposed to address you in a few lectures concerning the distinction between the spirit and the letter within philosophy. In my last lecture I tried, in a general way, to explain what I mean by "the spirit" and how I distinguish it from "the letter." Spirit as such is the ability of the productive imagination to convert feelings into representations. Spirit, in this sense of the word, can be ascribed to all beings capable of representation. *Spirit,* in the *special* sense in which we certainly appear to be justified in denying spirit altogether to many persons, is the ability to raise to consciousness the deeper feelings underlying those other feelings which relate to the physical world. These deeper feelings relate to a suprasensible world order, and the ability to raise them to consciousness may be termed the ability to convert ideals and ideas into representations. I also showed how these representations of a purely spiritual character are, for the purposes of communication between spiritual beings, clothed in bodies and thereby become expressed—to the extent that such expression is possible. I showed how persons lacking in spirit never see beyond this dead body and are incapable of employing it to lift themselves to an intuition of the ideal which this body expresses. In imitation, such persons construct other bodies lacking in spirit altogether.

You know that my only intention in embarking upon this general inquiry is to apply the first principles of this inquiry to philosophy.

An application of this sort is certainly needed and is worth the effort. For there are undoubtedly plenty of people who will readily grant everything that I said last time and will really understand and feel the truth of what I was saying, but will nevertheless make the following objection: "Spirit may certainly be needed in the fine arts, in literature, painting, music, etc., but what role does it have in philosophy?" Others would be willing to concede the possibility of employing imagination in philosophy, but would contend that such a procedure is injurious, inappropriate, and totally ruinous. "Philosophy," they will say, "must make its

inquiries with cool and solemn seriousness and must proceed step by measured step. Imagination must be scrupulously kept outside of the realm of philosophy. In this realm it produces nothing but empty chimeras and incoherent, feverish dreams lacking any stability, force, or truth." And if what they are talking about is an unregulated imagination
10 which is not held in check by cool reason, then they are, of course, completely correct. But if this is what they are talking about, then they have expressed themselves far too narrowly: for it is injurious and ruinous to abandon oneself to the unbridled imagination in any affair of the human spirit, and not just in philosophy. This produces wild, misshapen monstrosities in the fine arts every bit as much as in philosophy. But such undisciplined and overheated imagination is not spirit at all; on the contrary, it is the most fatuous spiritlessness possible. Rather than a product of our pure spiritual nature, it is a monstrous offspring of the wild force of nature. Imagination of this sort does not raise to consciousness those ideas and ideals which have their basis within us; instead, it slaps together eccentric shapes out of material derived from the external manifold. Rather than importing a higher order into nature, it destroys what order it finds. Rather than returning to the human heart, it storms around in a fiery rage on the surface of external things. There is nothing productive about such imagination. It is, instead, an unregulated reproductive imagination. As soon as we have become aware of the way spirit works, we will be able to distinguish the creations of spirit within philosophy from the ravages wrought upon philosophy by such overheated enthusiasm and fanaticism.

The material of all philosophy is itself the human mind or spirit,[10] considered in all of its affairs, activities, and modes of acting. Only after it has made an exhaustive inventory of all of these modes of acting is philosophy *Wissenschaftslehre.* The philosopher observes the way in which the human mind works. He freezes this process, holding still for examination that which is changeable and transient within the mind. He begins to comprehend the way in which the mind acts. In order to engage in this activity of *comprehending* and *fixing,* one needs "spirit," in the previously indicated sense of the word. This is the point on which I will dwell today, for it sheds light upon the entire nature of philosophizing, and especially upon the nature of philosophizing in accordance with the Critical method.

The human mind or spirit is activity and nothing but activity. To become acquainted with *it* means to become acquainted with its acts, for it contains nothing else with which one could become acquainted. I do not expect that any of my listeners will entertain the crass notion that the
11 soul could be anything else but an active force—the notion, for example,

[10]"der menschliche Geist."

of the soul as a thing somewhere in space (What shape does this thing have? Is it round or square? And where is it? In the head? In the heart?) which presses upon the nerves (as the fingers press upon the keys of the piano perhaps?). We want to know *how* the human spirit *acts*. We can learn no more about the spirit than this, and there is nothing more there which could be learned.

We are only indirectly conscious of our own acting. We are conscious of it only by means of the object of our acting, that is, through the object upon which we act. We are never conscious of acting as such, and on account of the laws governing the human mind we could never be conscious of this. The only way we can become conscious of the action of our own mind is if *this action* of which we wish to become conscious is acted on *in turn*, that is, becomes the object of an action called "reflection." When I entertain a representation of the physical world, all that I am conscious of is the physical world. The only way that I can become conscious of *my own activity* qua representing is by entertaining a representation of my *activity of representing* the physical world. In doing so, I stand upon a higher level; I reflect upon my own activity, which is present within my representation. It is possible to engage in such reflection. For the sake of those of you who may require this, but only in passing, I call your attention to the fact that this is the very essence of transcendental philosophy, namely, that it does not directly engage in representing, but rather in representing the *process of representation* itself. Ordinary human understanding reflects directly upon what is represented, but in transcendental philosophy what is reflected upon is the activity of representing (the representing subject), whereas that which is represented is reflected upon only indirectly, by means of reflection upon the representing subject.[11] Once this philosophical pathway has been discovered and entered upon, then it becomes clear that it is the only path which will lead to well-founded knowledge. What remains amazing is that it was possible for philosophical judgment not to enter upon this path from the very beginning. (Though this provides new proof that the simplest things are the most difficult of all for men to discover.) With this I return to my inquiry. In order to make this more concrete, think of various *levels* of reflection: I can reflect upon my own act of representing, I can reflect in turn upon my act of representing this act of repre-
12 senting, and I can continue to reflect in this manner indefinitely—though one is justified in continuing to engage in this process of reflection only so long as it has any use, that is, until one has generated a pure, general logic. But I am unable to reflect without *abstracting*, be-

[11] "Hierin nun . . . besteht das Wesen der transscendentalen Philosophie, dass nicht geradezu vorgestellt, sondern dass das Vorstellen vorgestellt werde, das nicht, nach Art des gemeinen Menschenverstandes, unmittelbar über das vorgestellte, sondern über das vorstellende: und erst vermittelst dieses über das vorgestellte reflektirt werde."

cause I cannot be conscious of two clear representations at the same time. As soon as one representation becomes clear, the other one drops back into the realm of obscure feelings, and it should do so: this is precisely what "abstracting" means. So long as we are conscious, one representation after another sinks back into darkness—in accordance with the blind laws of association and without any assistance on our part. Old impressions give way to new ones. What the philosopher is supposed to do is to displace a present representation *voluntarily* and *consciously* through his own intellectual *spontaneity:* he is supposed to engage in abstraction. He is supposed to fill the place occupied by the displaced representation with another specific representation: he is supposed to engage in reflection. This entire process is called "attentiveness,"[12] and it is unnecessary to mention that anyone who cannot *pay attention* cannot *philosophize.*

To return to our first example: just as the representation of a physical world is present in my consciousness, so is an image of this physical world present in my imagination. You know from my previous lecture that I contend (and will rigorously prove at the proper time—though the contention in question may well amount to no more than that of Kantianism *properly understood*) that this image of the physical world is nothing more than a product of the absolutely creative imagination, an image which, since the time we first became acquainted with ourselves, has been projected by our imagination with the greatest ease and effortlessness. It may well be—indeed, it is very probable—that the projection of these images of the imagination required greater effort during the first days, weeks, and months of our existence in the material world. But since no consciousness is possible in advance of the production—indeed, in advance of the effortless production—of such images, we were naturally unconscious of the effort such production cost us at first. Yet we believe our parents when they tell us that we existed during the
13 first, second, and third years of our lives (here I am not speaking in a strictly philosophical manner), even though we have no memory of being conscious during those years, nor have we any memory of such a memory. Since (to speak in the ordinary manner) we believe that we once existed in the material world without any consciousness, though equipped with everything necessary for consciousness and with an aptitude for reason, the question is: How can we explain this lack of consciousness? If we examine the matter thoroughly, the only answer we can give is that at that time our productive imagination had not yet acquired the facility (which can be acquired only by practice) of construing feelings as images from the material world; in other words, we then lacked mind or spirit itself in the most general sense of the word.

[12]"Aufmerksamkeit."

If I may say something which I realize may sound presumptious, but which can be rigorously demonstrated and which, even without any proof, can only sound presumptious to those who do not understand it at all: just as we were ushered by birth into this material world, so philosophy seeks—by means of a total rebirth—to usher us into a new and higher world. (I am speaking here of transcendental philosophy, not of the ordinary sort of "popular philosophy"—which is not philosophy at all.) Our first birth inserted us into the series constituted by the specific characteristics of that which is *represented;* this second birth seeks to lift us into the series constituted by the specific characteristics of that which *represents.* The same difficulty that kept us from entering the first world also prevents us from entering this second one.

Our rule tells us from what we are supposed to abstract [viz., our immediate representations of the physical world], and this is something which is actually present in us without any assistance from us. But that upon which we are supposed to reflect is not something which is present without any assistance from us, nor can it be furnished by the rule. All the rule says is, "reflect upon whatever remains to you after abstraction has been accomplished." But if nothing remains, then what will we philosophize about? Obviously, about nothing. But if nothing is all that remains, then we have not engaged in abstraction. For what is present can be displaced only by something else which takes its place. If nothing else takes its place, then it remains present. Now suppose that we are philosophers or that we consider ourselves to be philosophers: what have we retained from all of this? Obviously nothing more than the rule, "abstract from this and that, and reflect upon what remains after you have done so." Perhaps we can state this rule perfectly and comment upon its expression in a very scholarly fashion, though we have never actually
14 followed it. In this case, we have preserved a dead body instead of the spirit—a map to the promised land, rather than this land itself.

The new series into which we are supposed to be introduced [by philosophy] is the series constituted by the actions of the human mind itself, and no longer the series constituted by the objects of these actions. These actions are supposed to be represented. But since no representation is possible without an image, images of these actions must also be present. But all images are produced by the absolute spontaneity of the imagination, and thus so too are these images. We are acquainted with some of these images—though by no means with the highest actions of the human mind—from Kant's writings, where they are called "schemata," whereas the way the imagination operates with such images is called by Kant the "schematism."[13] Transcendental philosophy in its

[13]Kant's account of the "Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding" is presented in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* A137/B176–A147/B187.

totality ought to be and can be nothing but an accurate schema of the human mind in its totality.

Is there anyone who cannot see that this assigns an entirely new and unforeseen task to the imagination, a task which it will find to be only slightly easier than it found the task of projecting images to be at the start of its earthly life? Is there anyone who cannot see that the feelings on which these images are based lie in a deeper region of the human mind, and that the ability to project such images is exactly what we have already described as "spirit"? Thus is there anyone who cannot see that the material of philosophy presupposes spirit for its very possibility, and that all philosophizing which lacks spirit is completely empty and is about absolutely nothing?

Let me mention a perfect example of this: There is certainly no one among you who does not know that under the name *Wissenschaftslehre* I have labored upon a rigorously scientific transcendental philosophy, and that this philosophy is erected upon what remains after one has abstracted from everything possible—that is, upon the pure I. A science of this type can furnish no rule except the following: One should continue to abstract from everything possible, until something remains from which it is totally impossible to abstract. What remains is the pure I, which, precisely because one cannot abstract from it, is at the same time completely determined as regulative for the capacity for thinking.[14] The
15 pure I is that from which one simply cannot abstract, because it is the abstracting subject, or (which amounts to exactly the same thing), because it is what posits itself absolutely. This principle may now be considered to be *merely regulative* for the capacity for thinking, that is, in the course of the inquiry this principle must not be contradicted. This makes it very easy to point out the defect in all systems which assume anything, no matter how negligible, to which the I is supposed to be related only passively. For just as surely as the I is an I, nothing can pertain to it which it does not ascribe to itself and toward which, consequently, it is not at the same time actively related.

Yet even if one employs this principle in this quite correct manner, it still remains entirely possible that one has merely learned the letter of this principle without having grasped its spirit. Perhaps one employs the formula that expresses this principle because one has accepted it on trust or faith, or perhaps because one has noticed how useful it is for providing specific explanations for all of those things which philosophy is supposed to explain. Nevertheless, so long as one has not had the intuition of what is expressed in this formula, then one possesses no more than a formula. And even if such a person were able to expound a philosophy, one which perhaps has spirit and life for someone else, it would still have

[14] "Denkvermögen," or "faculty of thought."

none *for us* [i.e., for the person who expounds it]; for us, it would be no more than "philosophy by formula."[15]

If one lacks the intuition of that for which this formula stands, then, unless my own imagination is deceiving me, one can still raise oneself to a consciousness of an intuition of the pure I (an inner intuition, of course). One can do so by accustoming oneself to disciplined, strict abstraction and by engaging in higher and higher levels of reflection. Kant seems to share this opinion, and somewhere he speaks of the I as the object of an intellectual intuition.[16] Yet I will dwell no longer on this point, especially since I cannot unconditionally advise you to push on to the highest levels of speculation until you have spent enough time on the lower levels.

But just because one is not clearly conscious of any such intuition it does not follow that such an intuition may not be present anyway. Whether such an intuition is to be found in a person's mind is something which he can see for himself in the consequences which its presence necessarily entails.

16 Such an intuition has consequences for one's theoretical thinking. A person whose philosophizing is guided merely by formulas and not by inner intuition is like a student who keeps glancing anxiously back at the model he is copying. The disjointed character of his philosophical assertions, the constant breaking of the thread, which he must then again and again search out and retie, his lack of any uniformity of approach, his lack of firmness and boldness: all of this shows that he is always thinking anxiously of the formulas. Nevertheless, sooner or later he will forget his formulas and will be conquered by the habit which has become a second nature to him. The presence of any transcendent assertions within systems which are supposed to be transcendental is an indication of such a victory of habit over the rule which has not yet become something natural. Anyone who feels within himself the presence of that from which he can never abstract will find it physically impossible, even for a moment, to forget himself to the point where he believes that he has abstracted from this. It is impossible for him, even for a moment, to imagine that something could be present for him which was not present in his consciousness and in accord with the rules of consciousness. With lightning speed he can detect in others the presence of any deception on this

[15] "blosse Formular Philosophie."

[16] In fact Kant frequently denied the possibility of any nonsensuous (i.e., intellectual) intuition. Perhaps the unidentified passage Fichte has in mind is the following: "Everything that is represented through a sense is so far always appearance, and consequently we must either refuse to admit that there is an inner sense, or we must recognize that the subject, which is the object of this sense, can be represented through it only as an appearance, not as that subject would judge of itself if its intuition were self-active only, that is, if it were intellectual" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B68).

point. It is impossible to deceive him about this, for it is by no means true that the deception involved in thinking that things in time and space are things in themselves is an unavoidable deception, and I believe it is appropriate to say so loudly and decisively. Of course, it is necessary to *act* in regard to these things as if they were things in themselves, since our action itself is mediated by representation. One cannot act without holding before oneself the image of one's act. But the act and that which is acted upon must necessarily be viewed from the same reflective standpoint, and thus the technical, practical delusion is unavoidable. No experiment, no product of human art, is possible without ascribing to the object the forms of sensibility, because one has to ascribe them to oneself in the course of the act (and at the proper point I will certainly explain why this is necessary). It is necessary to *act* toward the objects in this way, but it is not at all necessary to *think* of them in this way—when, that is, one is merely thinking of them in order to think of them. This deception is based upon the habit of stopping at the lowest level of reflection. This habit can be overcome by a new habit, which can be acquired through
17 ceaseless and thorough reflection and constant attentiveness to oneself. Acting pulls us constantly back down to the lower level, but with the least self-reflection we can at the same moment become once more clearly conscious that we live in the world of appearances. Through the least self-reflection one can once more lift oneself into the realm of pure reason and pure truth, and one can dwell and wander in this higher world—at least spiritually. Until one has acquired this skill, one has not yet made the spirit of philosophy one's own. Though one may have knowledge of philosophy, one is not yet a philosopher; one is at best on the way to becoming a philosopher. Perhaps one will someday find pleasure in philosophy, but so far it has remained no more than a dead and empty item of knowledge.

An intuition of the sort discussed has the most far-reaching consequences for a person's practical attitude, and it has these consequences precisely because of the consequences it has for one's theoretical thinking. "All that surrounds me are mere appearances, which are present for me only insofar as I wish them to be. They are nothing to me except what I make of them myself, and they have no influence upon me except for the influence I grant them." What can perturb a man who says this over and over to himself at every moment of his life—and who has the strength to believe it? What can make him lose his composure or shift him from his firm intentions? Earthly joys? He knows that he dwells in a world of deception; he wishes to dwell nowhere but where he has to dwell. No person is more free than he from the irrational madness of struggling pointlessly against nature. He surrenders himself to this charming deception and lets it play with him—but only so long as he wishes, not so long as it does. When he no longer wishes to surrender to

this deception, he breaks the spell and it dissolves, leaving him once again standing there alone and resolute, with his foundation within himself. Can he be moved by earthly sufferings? What would count as suffering for him? So long as he considers himself to be worthy of life and able to make some worthwhile contribution to the same, he will always have more joy than suffering. For he possesses the highest joy, the one that outweighs everything else: joy in himself, which only becomes stronger and provides greater pleasure the more he is driven into him-
18 self by external sorrows. What then is the worst misfortune that can befall him? It is what one ordinarily calls "death." But what is death, this most terrible and frequently feared thing that can befall us on earth? Death is an appearance like any other appearance. But no appearance can affect the I. Only if one thinks that it can affect the I is there anything fearful about death. But anyone who feels his own independence will find it physically impossible to think that death can affect the I. For such a person death is nothing more than the end of a particular series of appearances. He does not know what will come after the end of this series, and that is the least of his worries. What he does know is that *he* will exist. It is impossible for him to think that he will not exist, for the I is that from which he cannot abstract. To try to think of oneself as nonexistent is pure nonsense.

Philosophy consists in just this attitude, and this alone is philosophy. Philosophy is not something that floats in our memory or is printed in books for us to read; instead, philosophy is what has stirred and transformed our spirit and has ushered it into a higher, spiritual order of things. Philosophy is something which has to exist within us. It must be our entire being; it must be the whole education of our spirit and heart.

This is the philosophy toward which all of our speculations are aimed and must be aimed. Make no mistake about this: nothing that I or any other teacher can lecture to you about is philosophy. We are fortunate if we possess philosophy ourselves, but we cannot give it away. All of our philosophical assertions are "bodies"[17] and nothing more. And we hand these bodies over to you in order to help you to develop philosophy out of and through your own self—not that you could not also do so without the help of these "bodies." I must explain, and I wish to do so despite the danger of misinterpretation, that if one does not want to take upon oneself the effort of penetrating into philosophy by the thorny path of speculation, then it is futile to expect those benefits which philosophy can guarantee: that firmness of spirit and unshakable elevation of the soul, that calm disdain for the material world and self-contained inner life which philosophy can provide. For it is speculation (which, in any case, is tiresome only at first and is soon accompanied by its own joys)

[17]"Körper," i.e., physical embodiments of spiritual ideas.

19 which furnishes both the material and the strength—which narrow souls lack—to grasp and to comprehend this material. Anyone who only wants to skim the results [of philosophy] from the surface, leaving behind the proofs by which these results were obtained, will not even obtain the results, but instead will obtain only the mere formulas in which these results are expressed. He wants to have warmth without light; but this warmth does not last, for it has no foundation and will be cooled by the first breeze of controversy or doubt. This is the philosophy which, I have claimed, makes it possible to dispense with all previous expedients and nostrums (which, in any case, can no longer be applied). This is the philosophy which, I have claimed, transforms man and lifts him to a new life. And I have claimed that with the discovery of this philosophy an entirely new epoch in the history of the human species has begun—or, if one prefers, an entirely new and different human species has arisen, one for which all previous forms of human nature and activity on earth are no more than preparatory, if they retain any value at all. This is the philosophy to which our age summons us all and which we can all take a hand in developing just as soon as we have the desire to do so.

Third Lecture
Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy

In these lectures we are concerned with the difference between the spirit and the letter within philosophy. Philosophy's material is itself a spiritual product; anyone who philosophizes without spirit philosophizes about nothing, and since one cannot philosophize about nothing, he does not philosophize at all. This was the content of our last lecture.

We reached this conclusion *in the following way:* Philosophy is the systematic history of the human spirit's universal modes of acting.[18] If a
20 systematic history of these modes of acting is to be possible, then we have to remove from our consciousness everything which does not belong to these modes of acting; for example, we have to remove everything which is only an object of the action of the human mind. For the purpose of philosophy we engage in *abstraction.* Every representation which is present without any conscious endeavor on our part is thrust aside, and the place occupied by these representations is supposed to be taken by other representations, which are then reflected upon in turn. But the representations upon which philosophy is supposed to reflect are not produced by means of mere abstraction. These representations, at least in

[18]"des menschlichen Geistes in seinen allgemeinen Handlungsweisen."

part (i.e., insofar as they include an intuition) must first be produced by the imagination. But the ability of the imagination to do this, especially when it raises to consciousness higher images which are not encountered in ordinary experience, is called "spirit." Accordingly, not even the material of philosophy is possible without spirit.

Throughout this whole investigation we have been presupposing that the rules concerning that from which we are to abstract and that upon which we are to reflect are given to us, just as we have also presupposed familiarity with the way in which the material of any possible philosophy should be generated. It is thus clear that another, higher question is still entirely unanswered: Where do we obtain the rules governing philosophical reflection as such? And how can we be sure that these rules are correct?

Let me try to clarify what is actually involved in this inquiry. Anyone who assumes that a philosophical system is possible also assumes, if he only understands himself properly, that the human mind[19] acts in accordance with fixed, lasting, and necessary laws. Either neither of these assumptions has any specific meaning, or else they have the same meaning. If the acts of the human mind were not regulated by fixed laws, then how could it ever occur to anyone to try to establish anything specific and of universal validity on this subject and to assert, "this is the way the human mind is, was, and always will be"? Anyone who assumes that a philosophical system is possible also assumes that there is a certain order and hierarchy in the laws of the mind, that they have a fixed relationship to each other. Perhaps he assumes that there is a supreme, universal law
21 (e.g., that one cannot abstract from the I) and that there are, in turn, particular laws which determine everything which lies within the sphere of the supreme law but is not determined by it and that there are still more particular laws which determine everything which lies within the sphere of these latter laws but is not determined by them. Thus all the suns, and with them, all possible celestial bodies, revolve in a general movement around the axis of the world (which is, of course, something which exists only in thought); all the planets, accompanied by their moons, revolve in their particular movements, each around its sun; and the moons, in their particular movement, revolve around their planets.

But this system of laws is not something which is forced upon us or which we can be acquainted with apart from our own agency. Everything that occurs in our mind does so in accordance with all of its laws—the most universal, the relatively universal, the particular, and the individual laws—which are all met with in *one* and the same occurrence, and which, if they appear as laws at all, appear as a single law. Within this one occurrence the various laws cannot be distinguished, no more than the

[19]"der menschliche Geist."

astronomer who observes only one star can distinguish in what appears to him to be its simple movement the various laws governing this movement or the various movements which these laws allow us to distinguish. He cannot distinguish that movement which the star in question has in common with *the entire universe* from the movement which it shares only with *some* other stars or from that movement which belongs to it *alone*.

Precisely in order to be able to distinguish the *universal, general,* and *particular* laws present in one and the same act of the human spirit from each other, we have to abstract from *some* of them and reflect upon *others*. Thus philosophical reflection should ascend from the particular laws to the more generally shared ones and from these to the universal ones.

The correctness of the result clearly depends upon the correctness of the course which reflection adopts; that is, it depends upon whether reflection really begins by abstracting from the individual events, and then abstracts in turn from the particular laws and from the higher level ones, etc.; it also depends upon whether no member of this series is skipped and none is assigned to a level higher or lower than is appropriate to it. It is clear that the very possibility of engaging in such reflection
22 already presupposes just what is supposed to be discovered, namely, it presupposes those laws according to which our mind acts and the hierarchical relation of these laws to each other. In brief, the proposed inquiry is either *impossible* (since one cannot know in advance of the inquiry what one is supposed to discover thereby) or *useless* (since we already know what we are supposed to be trying to discover).

Even more briefly and clearly: I want to know the laws in accordance with which my mind acts. The only way I can discover these laws is by comparing them with the actions of the mind. But in order to do this I must already be acquainted with the law against which I want to test the act in question. Why then am I inquiring about something I already know? And if I do not know it already, how can I even inquire about it, since such knowledge is the sole condition of engaging in such an inquiry? When I engage in what I call "inquiry," what more am I doing than repeating what I already knew prior to the inquiry?

Merely by arguing we could never get out of this circle. Were man no more than a *thinking* being, and if he did not also possess the capacity which we call "reason" in the narrow sense, then all philosophy, that is, any systematic history of the human mind, would be absolutely impossible.

This is where the drive toward truth comes in. For if one allows this drive to develop and works to cultivate it, it becomes the *sense* for truth, that is, a presentiment that something might be found in a particular place and that one should pursue this or that path in order to find out. Whether or not this leads one to the discovery of what was sought, one

gains something in either case. In the first case, one gains the truth; in the second case, one obtains the information that nothing is to be discovered by pursuing this particular path of inquiry, which can then be eliminated from the total number of paths to be investigated.

Is there anyone who cannot see that this "sense for truth" is no more than a feeling, and that in order to make any use of it one has to raise this feeling to consciousness and must make the promptings of this feeling at least clear enough to enable one to pursue the path they indicate? And is there anyone who cannot see that the prerequisite for making the first step toward philosophy is the ability to become conscious of our feelings, that is, that ability which we have called "spirit" in the narrower sense of the word?

23 This is how it has always been. Everyone who has ever made any discovery within philosophy or has erected a new system possessed spirit, for even if the system in question proved untenable, it was nevertheless *one* of the human mind's necessary attempts to produce a *Wissenschaftslehre.* Such persons possessed spirit. Those of their followers who were no more than followers *memorized* what these innovators had *felt* and *thought,* which they then *repeated.* They did not notice the spirit, and thus they copied down instead the unhelpful letter. But this is not the place to give examples.

There is another respect in which spirit is needed [in philosophy]; it is required simply in order to be able to make the decision to follow these pointers. Feeling points out where the truth may lie. But it does no more than *indicate* this; it does not *provide* us with the truth. All of you in my audience, even if you have only heard me a few times, realize that I base everything in the human mind or spirit upon feeling. But you have quite failed to understand me if you believe that I think the issue could ever rest with feeling. Feeling must be illuminated and developed. It has to be analyzed and determined by judgment. It is a sign of spirit to raise one's feelings to clear consciousness; but to appeal to mere feeling as a proof is a sign of lack of spirit and is the abundant and inexhaustible source of all overheated enthusiasm and fanaticism. I said that we must follow the pointers that only feeling can provide and that spirit is needed simply to make the decision to do so. It always remains possible that we will find nothing at the end of our path. This would be unfortunate, but it would be even worse if, by following this path, we should discover that nothing at all is certain or true or fixed or well founded, and that all that we have clung to until now and upon which we have based our most cherished convictions is, after all, no more than a dream. Should we subject ourselves to the effort of prolonged work and deep reflection if such a risk is involved? What, except for the purest love of truth for its own sake, could enable us to do so? Such love is at the same time the deepest feeling of our own high dignity and great vocation, which no

one can grasp who does not possess a considerable degree of spirit. No one incapable of such a sentiment is capable of deciding: "*I will* uncover
24 the truth, whatever it may cost and whatever the truth might turn out to be. I want to know the truth of this matter—even if what I should find is that it contains no truth at all." A person who does not feel this way will never become a discoverer, least of all in philosophy.

But a considerable number of you might reply: "But we have no wish to become discoverers of this sort either. Aren't these remarks, which deal only with the discovery of newer, better, more comprehensive, and more fruitful methods, meant only for professional philosophers, especially for those wishing to advance that science? But this is not our concern. We have chosen a different specialty, and we will, to the best of our ability, do what we are required to do within this speciality. For us philosophy is only a tool, an auxillary science, and we hope that our philosophy teacher will acquaint us with the best methods available and that we will be able to retain these methods. We have to depend upon our teacher for this and have faith in him."

This objection certainly contains something true, but also something false. It is true that one does not have to think about discovering methods which apply to a considerable portion of an entire subject or to the entire subject itself until one has first become accustomed to thinking precisely, to making general surveys, to shifting voluntarily from one point of view to another in order to compare them, and to grasping large wholes quickly. But at the same time, it is also true that everyone has to grasp the individual elements of a philosophical system in his own manner and has to incorporate them into his own individual system of thinking. All that the *most perfect* presentation *can* or *should* do is make the domain in which error is possible as *small* as possible. But truth is *still only a single point* within the smallest possible domain, and the novice has to apprehend and construe *this point* all by himself. No teacher can make his teaching completely individualized, and no teacher should do this. Everyone must discover for himself *how* something is construed in accordance with his own manner of thinking and how this is to be squared with what he previously considered to be true and settled. This requires at least a certain degree of *spirit.* The literalist clarifies nothing for him-
25 self; instead, he learns it by heart and then repeats it. He grasps nothing with his imagination and his understanding, but rather with his memory alone. There are many things floating in his memory which do not belong to him, but are completely foreign. "So and so said." "In this or that book it says": this is the ultimate and highest demonstrative ground that we can expect from him. It is very much to philosophy's disadvantage and explains in particular the poor reputation which philosophy enjoys even among honest men, that every great man is followed by others who are not nearly so great and who transform results which were

originally proposed with spirit and which can only be grasped with spirit into a catechism which can be—and quickly is—learned by heart. Philosophy can only be rescued if (among other things) it is presented in such a way that it cannot be learned by heart—and, for a while at least, quite appropriate means for achieving this end will continue to remain available. A person who continues to feel impulses and pleasure within himself will work without rest until he succeeds in obtaining knowledge, and in doing so he will enjoy exercizing his strength as well. A person who is totally demoralized (if, as I doubt, there are any young men in this condition) at least guards against speaking about things which he knows quite well that he does not comprehend.

I must now call your attention to yet another aspect of philosophizing for which spirit, in the previously indicated sense of the term, is required.

One of the principle rules of all philosophizing to any purpose is this: We should always bear in mind *the whole.* No matter how trivial or subtle a particular inquiry appears to be, we should at least retain within ourselves a feeling for the whole. This feeling should always accompany us, and we should not make a single step along our path which is not in the spirit of the whole and made with this spirit. It is this which constitutes the distinction between the *true philosopher* and the mere *wool gatherer*[20]—a distinction which we can feel even if we cannot always clearly think it. The wool gatherer is not distinguished from the true philosopher by, as it were, the profundity of his speculations. Speculation recognizes no limits, except for the limits of human reason—a limit which cannot be abstracted from the I. It is vain and foolish to wish to assign any other
26 limits to speculation. The wool gatherer cannot go any deeper than the philosopher. He usually does not go nearly as deep and remains superficial in comparison with the true philosopher. The difference between the two is that the wool gatherer philosophizes *without* any feeling for the whole, whereas the true inquirer philosophizes *with* this feeling.

The wool gatherer plunges into the investigation of individual problems as if everything depended upon *them* and as if they constituted a self-sufficient whole. While he is occupied with these problems he does not look beyond them: they constitute his world. The true philosopher relates everything to the whole, and he sees everything as it really is, namely, as part of the whole. Thus the former produces those hairsplitting and empty little thoughts which in themselves lack any solidity, support, or strength. The true philosopher, on the other hand, gives support and solidity to his subtle distinctions by linking them to the whole and intimately connecting them therewith. Consequently, the wool gatherer descends into abysses where nothing attracts him and where he can find no spiritual nourishment, whereas the true philoso-

[20]"Grübler."

pher always lets the relation to the whole determine how deeply he should go; he undertakes nothing superfluous. The labors of the former are sustained and rewarded by nothing but an interest in his own small acuity, whereas the latter feels an interest in truth, mankind, and improvement to be present in all of his investigations—those that seem minor as well as those that seem important. And the one is as sacred to him as the other, because they are both parts of the same lofty whole.

Refined persons, persons from what they call "the great world," have ridiculed many of the questions which philosophers have proposed and have mocked such investigations as empty hairsplitting and pedantic daydreaming. Now no person can be totally wrong, so presumably even these "refined persons" are not totally wrong. And they are certainly right and are justified in their ridicule if it is aimed at the wool gatherer, the man who investigates every question anxiously and attentively, but without knowing what he wants to do with any answers he may receive, posing questions simply for their own sake. But their ridicule is inappropriate and recoils upon them if it is meant to apply to those who understand the importance of such investigations for the entire system
27 and who understand the admittedly distant but still intimate connection between these investigations and those truths which are the foundation of human morality and comfort.

Is there anyone who cannot see that it is only by transforming philosophy into oneself and making its spirit one's own that one can retain this constant, lasting, and intuitive feeling of the whole in the midst of inquiries that are in themselves sufficient to demand all of our attention and effort? Who cannot see that this is possible only if one has put oneself into the particular frame of mind which I described last week and which I neither wish nor am able to repeat today. Then and only then is science something sacred to us. Only then do we treat all of its parts with dignity. Only then are we able to take part in the most minor investigations with the same enthusiasm that we have when we take part in the most immediately important ones, because we always feel that the former lead to the latter.

Furthermore, then and only then does philosophy have the effect that it should have upon our practical attitudes, that is, upon the way in which we harmonize with ourselves in our acting and thinking. The surest evidence that we have not yet grasped philosophy within our spirit and that it remains a foreign addition which does not belong to us, a ceremonial costume which we only wear on festive occasions and then pack away as soon as we believe we no longer have to wear it, is the following: that we accept errors in life which we have refuted in our study, that we admire or fear things in the world which we disdain from our desk or lecturn, or that we deem worthy of our endeavors, cares, and labor things which we have declared in our writings to be unimpor-

tant, futile, and vain. If a person has philosophized with spirit, then all of his utterances and acts testify to his theoretical first principles. If a person has spirit himself, he will be able to infer another's entire system from his assertions and acts, for these are connected with one's whole system as well as with every individual element of this system. Wherever such a person finds himself, he always remains whole, and whenever he acts he acts as a whole—for he is a unity which contains no divisions.

Then and only then, therefore, can philosophy provide us with that *well-founded self-confidence* without which even the only true bliss, that is,
28 self-respect and self-esteem, remains incomplete and insecure. "I will always act in accordance with the first principles which now guide my actions, because I will always will to do so." Only the person who has completely assimilated these principles to himself is capable of this lofty thought—only the person whose principles have become himself and who, at every moment of his life, feels that it would be physically impossible to separate himself from his principles, so long as he does not wish to separate himself from himself. Everything external to us is changeable and uncertain. We can lose everything, and ultimately we will. Everything can forsake us, and ultimately it will. When he considers it clearly, this thought will bring woe to a person who does not have a feeling of his own I and who cannot grasp that *he* will remain true to *himself*. We do not know what will happen to us, nor can we know this. All that we can know is how we will act. The person who knows this is fortunate, because it is the sole foundation of our entire dignity and well-being.

It requires spirit to produce this state of mind within oneself, the same degree of spirit which I have indicated and described on several occasions. And this is what I wish for you most sincerely and what I have tried to stimulate, arouse, and kindle within you by everything that I have said to you.

VI

On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth

Editor's Preface

Die Horen was a celebrated and short-lived journal founded by Friedrich Schiller during Fichte's first year at Jena. Studiously avoiding any discussion of politics or current events, *Die Horen* ("The graces") was dedicated to the "pursuit of truth and beauty" in the form of nontechnical discussions of history, philosophy, literature, and art. The aim, as described by Schiller himself in the first issue, was to contribute to the creation of that "ideal of a nobler humanity which reason demands, but of which we so easily lose sight in daily life."[1] In accordance with the "interdisciplinary" character of the enterprise, Schiller assembled a diverse and talented editorial board, which included some of his most brilliant colleagues at Jena (where Schiller was a professor of history and philosophy). Goethe, J. G. Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Karl von Woltmann, and Fichte were among those who accepted Schiller's invitation to serve on the board.

"Ueber Belebung und Erhöhung des reinen Interesse für Wahrheit" was Fichte's contribution to the first issue of the new journal, published in January 1795. This text was composed during the first week of December 1794, that is, during an especially hectic period in Fichte's career.[2] How he was nevertheless able to prepare such an eloquent and

[1]Quoted by W. H. Bruford, in *Culture and Society in Classical Weimar, 1775–1806* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 330. This distinguished study is a valuable source of information concerning Weimar and Jena during the period of Fichte's professorship. Of Schiller's new journal, Bruford writes (p. 329): "Perhaps no product of the German classical age proclaims the ideal aims of its leading writers so clearly as *Die Horen,* and none shows them collaborating so harmoniously in the creation and diffusion of writings that embody the spirit of '*Humanität.*'"

[2]During the autumn of 1794 Fichte was engaged in almost constant controversy. In addition to the ongoing controversy over his decision to hold his public lectures on Sundays, he was also involved in the more serious conflict provoked by his efforts to dissolve the student fraternities. For further information see the editor's introduction.

profound little essay in such a brief period of time is explained in the letter that accompanied the manuscript: "I have only revised it without making any corrections. The time was too short for that. Thus I simply condensed two lectures on this topic—as you will certainly be able to tell from the skeletal appearance of the article."[3]

The two lectures to which Fichte's letter refers were the final lectures in his widely acclaimed "Morality for Scholars" series, which concluded in August 1794.[4] Since the text of only one of these two lectures has survived, this published article fills an important gap in our knowledge of the content of Fichte's public lectures during his first semester at Jena. To be sure, "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" is not a lecture and does not presume an acquaintance with "Morality for Scholars." Nevertheless, the full significance of this essay emerges only when it is read in conjunction with the published text of *Some Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation* and the posthumously published lectures "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy." In its content, if not in its form, "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" represents the conclusion of a chain of reflections which begins with the first lecture "Concerning the Scholar's Vocation." And to the extent that the entire series was intended to be a "popular introduction" to the study of philosophy, this essay constitutes an important portion of that introduction. In fact, "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" picks up the argument of the lecture series at almost exactly the point where it was left at the end of the third lecture, "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy."

The apparent circularity of philosophical reflection is one of the concluding themes of "Concerning the Difference between the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy." As described by Fichte, the philosopher's assigned task is to describe the "laws" that determine the actions of the mind. But in pursuing this intellectual task, the actions of his own mind must be determined by those very same rules he is ostensibly seeking to discover. Thus, to the extent that the philosophical enterprise is possible at all, and to the extent that the philosophical investigator is conscious of the rules governing his own reflections, it appears that he must already know in advance what he is seeking to discover. We can at least mitigate this appearance of circularity, but only by recognizing that we are more

[3]Fichte to Schiller, December 10, 1794.

[4]One of the two lectures Fichte excerpts and summarizes in this essay is certainly the final public lecture of the summer semester, as a comparison of the two texts reveals. No copy of the other lecture has survived, but presumably it was the penultimate lecture in the same series. For a conjectural reconstruction of the entire series of public lectures for the summer semester 1794, as well as for further information concerning the surviving text of the concluding lecture in the series, see the editor's preface to Section V, above.

than "thinking beings." In addition to our capacity to reflect and to understand, we also possess what Fichte calls "reason in the narrow sense." That is, we are endowed with an obscure "drive" or "sense" for the truth, a "presentiment" that we should direct our inquires in a particular direction. What is required of any philosopher (and indeed, of any "scholar" whatsoever) is that he raise this obscure feeling to consciousness. The mere feeling for truth must indeed serve as our starting point, but it must then be clarified and cultivated. Accordingly, the final lectures on "Morality for Scholars" were devoted to a deeper analysis of our native "interest in truth" and to an explanation of how this interest might be "stimulated and increased."

Despite its author's modest references to its "skeletal appearance," "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" is one of Fichte's more successful literary efforts. True to the editorial principles of *Die Horen,* the essay is an extraordinarily accessible treatment of some difficult topics. Indeed, its superficial lucidity disguises an original discussion of some complex and incompletely resolved philosophical issues. For example, Fichte's first step in the essay is to move from the freely acknowledged "interest" in truth to a recognition of an underlying "impulse" or "drive" toward truth. But what is a "drive"? And is it the sort of thing one can plausibly attempt to "heighten" or to "cultivate"? Drives (*Triebe*) are, by definition, original dispositions of our nature, and in this sense no drive, including the drive for truth, can be "aroused" at all if it is not already present. But even though the sheer presence of a drive within us is not something within our control, the decision to cultivate (or to resist) a particular drive is. And thus philosophy, which begins with the cultivation of the truth drive, must itself begin with a free act.

The decision to cultivate one's own "pure interest" in truth is a free act, and, like all free acts, it admits of no further derivation from any higher principle. Nor can such a decision be forced or coerced. "Like every ethical action, it occurs freely." It of course follows that the only people whom it makes any sense to exhort to use their freedom are precisely those who are already using it. As for the initial "breaking loose from the chains of nature's necessity"—that free act with which philosophizing must begin—it "is something that occurs without our knowing how." But just because we cannot explain how freedom is possible, it by no means follows that freedom itself is impossible. On the contrary, it is not only possible but actual. And this is something we can prove to ourselves. For we can exercise our freedom by choosing the particular direction in which our native powers shall be directed and by consciously selecting certain "interests" for cultivation. Hence the spiritual satisfaction felt by the lover of truth, for he knows that by pursuing the truth he is at the same time making himself free.

Once such a free decision has been made, however, another set of laws

comes into play, namely, those that govern the means for "stimulating and increasing" one's drives. Here Fichte proposes, without the slightest argument, a distinction between those drives strengthened by repeated satisfaction and those destroyed by gratification. Drives of the latter sort include all those rooted in our sensuous, animal nature, whereas drives of the former sort are said to be based upon our higher "rational" or "moral" nature. But the most remarkable thing about this distinction is that Fichte makes it in order to defend—against the Kantians—the legitimate role of the pleasure principle in the realm of spiritual cultivation. "Seek any pleasure which promotes your interest in truth," urges Fichte. "For it is simply true that any drive with a foundation in man's rational nature can be cultivated by pleasure and only in this way."

A complex theory of "drives" is tacitly presupposed throughout this essay. At various points Fichte refers to the differences between the animal drives on the one hand and the "pure drives" on the other. These "pure drives" include not only the drive to truth, but also the practical (or ethical) drive as well as the aesthetic drive.[5] To each of these drives there corresponds a particular imperative. Thus, for example, a careful analysis of the truth drive yields the imperative: "judge so that you can consider the manner in which you are now judging to be an eternal law for all of your judgments. Judge this particular case in a manner in which you could rationally wish to judge every case. Never make any exceptions in your manner of inference." A similar analysis of the practical drive yields the familiar "categorical imperative." But if it is part of Fichte's strategy to distinguish the various drives, he is equally concerned to deny the ultimacy of all such distinctions and to affirm that all of these "pure" drives can be derived from—and indeed are only special instances of—the highest drive of all: the drive toward unity and harmony with oneself. This drive, which was the theme of the very first lecture in the series, issues in the command: "always be at one with yourself."

Thus there is an elegant symmetry to the overall argument of the "Morality for Scholars" lectures (as concluded in the essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth"). They begin with a consideration of "the vocation of man as such" and conclude with an analysis of the "interest in truth." But this pure drive for truth turns out to be one of the clearest expressions of the fundamental human drive toward unity. Taken as a whole, the message of these lectures is hard to mistake: the fully human life is the life spent in pursuit of truth. This,

[5]The theory of human drives which appears to be implied in this essay is further (and more explicitly) developed in the article "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy." In the second letter Fichte posits the existence within man of three "basic drives"—the knowledge drive, the practical drive, and the aesthetic drive—all of which are but "particular manifestations of the one indivisible primary force in man" (*SW*, VIII:278; English translation by Elizabeth Rubenstein, p. 80).

however, is *not* because truth itself is the end of human life, but rather because "moral ability is strengthened along with intellectual power." In other words, the greatest benefits of stimulating and increasing the pure interest in truth are *practical.* Love of truth prepares the way for love of goodness. Nothing better accustoms us to relying upon ourselves; nothing liberates us more completely from "the chains of nature" than a life devoted to the pursuit of truth. And "when the mind or spirit is free in any respect, this liberates it in all the other respects."

Finally, one should be aware of Fichte's somewhat one-sided account of truth in this essay—an essay that was not, after all, intended to be a full-scale account of knowledge and truth, but only an investigation of "the pure interest in truth." Fichte does indeed say that "in itself, truth is merely *formal.* It consists of agreement and coherence in everything that we accept." But one should hesitate before concluding from this statement that Fichte advocates a "coherence theory of truth." To be sure, from the standpoint of this inquiry into the truth drive, we can say no more about truth itself than that our various beliefs must be consistent with each other. But, Fichte hastens to add, a single proposition may be at once formally true and materially false, and vice versa. The formal truth drive discussed in this essay concerns only the "how" and not the "what" of truth. Hence the puzzling reference to the truth drive as "reason in the narrow sense." Following Kant, Fichte associates "reason" with the desire—indeed, the demand—for systematic unity and coherence in our knowledge.[6] Consequently, the mysterious "sense of truth" which Fichte had invoked at the conclusion of his "Spirit and Letter" lectures turns out to be little more than a vague determination not to admit anything as true without first taking into consideration all of the other things one considers to be true and a heuristic resolve to allow previously acknowledged truths to guide one's search for new truths. As we "cultivate" this native impulse, our knowledge obtains ever greater and more clearly articulated systematic unity. But "unity" is not enough. Truth has material conditions as well. And though these material conditions, like the formal conditions here discussed, must ultimately be traced back to "feeling," the "feelings" in question have little to do with the pure "drive to truth" and are not mentioned in this essay. For an account of these "material conditions" of truth, one must turn to Fichte's more technical expositions of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

[6]"Understanding may be regarded as a faculty which secures the unity of appearances by means of rules, and reason as being the faculty which secures the unity of the rules of understanding under principles. Accordingly, reason never applies itself directly to experience or to any object, but to understanding, in order to give to the manifold knowledge of the letter an *a priori* unity by means of concepts, a unity which may be called the unity of reason, and which is quite different in kind from any unity that can be accomplished by the understanding" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A302/B359, trans. Norman Kemp Smith).

The text of "Ueber Belebung und Erhöhung des reinen Interesse für Wahrheit" upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW*, VIII: 342–52 (*AA* I, 3: 83–90).

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On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth

It is futile to expect that one might discover the truth by some lucky accident so long as one is not inspired by a lively interest in seeking the truth while disavowing everything else. An important question for anyone who wishes to affirm in his own person the dignity of reason is, accordingly: What do I have to do in order to awaken within myself a pure interest in truth, or in order at least to preserve, increase, and stimulate this interest?

Like every interest, the interest in truth is based upon one of our original drives. The drive for truth is one of our pure drives. No one *wants* to make a mistake, and everyone who does so thinks that his error is the truth. Could someone show him convincingly that he is wrong, then he would abandon his error immediately and would adopt in its stead the truth opposed to this error.

When something occurs which relates to this drive—when, for example, one discovers something which is true as such or when one recog-
VIII,343 nizes an error to be an error—then a feeling of approbation toward the former and aversion to the latter necessarily arises. Each of these feelings is totally independent of the particular content and consequences of the truth or error in question. When feelings of this sort are experienced repeatedly, an interest in truth as such arises. An interest of this sort cannot, therefore, be *produced;* for as a disposition it is based upon the nature of reason, and its expression is aroused within experience by the external world, without any conscious assistance from us. But such an interest can be *increased.*

Like every ethical action, this occurs freely. But all the rules governing the application of freedom already presuppose their own prior application. Thus the only person whom one can rationally exhort to use his freedom is someone who is already using it. This first act of freedom,

this breaking loose from the chains of nature's necessity, is something that occurs without our knowing how. Just as we are not at all conscious of our first step into the realm of consciousness, neither are we conscious of our first step into the realm of morality. At some point a burning ember falls into our soul, where it might glow for a long time in the darkness. Then it flares up and spreads, until it has finally enflamed the entire soul.

It is the nature of every practical interest within man to preserve and stimulate itself. Every gratification strengthens and renews such an interest and raises it more fully to consciousness. A finite being's only source of pleasure is the feeling of expanded need. The chief precept for increasing any human interest, and thus also for increasing the interest in truth, may accordingly be stated as follows: *Satisfy your drives!* This yields the following two rules in the case before us: Remove every interest which stands in opposition to the pure interest in truth, and seek any pleasure which promotes the pure interest in truth.

One should not be offended by this recommendation to seek pleasure (something which is otherwise properly suspect). For it is simply true that any drive with a foundation in man's rational nature can be cultivated by pleasure and only in this way. The kind of pleasure which has VIII,344 its foundation solely in the gratification of animal sensuousness spoils and destroys itself through its very gratification and is not the kind of pleasure that we are speaking of here. Intellectual or spiritual pleasure,[1] such as, for example, aesthetic pleasure, increases as it is gratified. It follows that the previously presented rule is also the only one which can be given for increasing a spiritual interest. Whether any spiritual pleasure should be recommended quite unconditionally is a question whose answer depends upon the answer to a prior question, namely, whether the drive to which the pleasure in question is related should itself be unconditionally increased. And the answer to this question depends, in turn, upon the answer to a still prior question, namely, whether the drive in question should be subordinated to any other drive. Thus, for example, man's aesthetic drive should certainly be subordinated to his drive for truth as well as to the highest drive of all, the drive for ethical goodness. Whether the drive for truth could conflict with any higher drive is something that will become evident in the course of our inquiry. Still, on this occasion anyway, I do not believe that I have to avoid certain expressions simply because they have been misused in the past.

Our interest in truth is supposed to be a *pure* interest; that is, truth, merely because it is truth, is supposed be the final aim of all our learning, thinking, and research.

In itself, however, truth is something merely *formal.* It consists of

[1] "geistiger Genuss."

agreement and coherence in everything that we accept, just as contradiction in our thinking constitutes error and falsehood. Everything in man, including therefore his truth, is subject to the supreme law which commands that one should always be at one with oneself.[2] Applied to our *actions* as such, this law states: Act so that, to the best of your knowledge, the manner in which you are acting can serve as an eternal law for all of your actions. Applied to our *judging*, the same law states: Judge so that you can consider the manner in which you are now judging to be an eternal law for all of your judgments. Judge this particular case in a manner in which you could rationally wish to judge every case. Never
VIII,345 make any exceptions in your manner of inference. All such exceptions are certainly sophistry. The friend of truth is distinguished from the sophist in the following manner: If we consider the things they say, then the former may be wrong and the latter right. Yet the former remains a friend of truth, even when he is in error, and the latter remains a sophist, even when he speaks the truth (perhaps because it serves his purpose to do so). But there is no contradiction contained in what the friend of truth says: without turning to the left or to the right, he proceeds straight along his path. The sophist is always changing paths; his movements describe a crooked, serpentine line as the point which he would like to reach changes. The friend of truth aims at no particular point; instead, he proceeds in a straight line, no matter what points may turn out to lie along this line.

Such an interest in truth merely for the sake of its *form* is the direct opposite of any interest in the *specific content* of propositions. *How* something has been discovered is irrelevant to a material interest of this sort, which is concerned only with *what* has been discovered.

Suppose that we previously asserted some proposition which has met with approval and brought us respect. And let us also suppose that we sincerely meant what we said. But, to be sure, even then what we asserted was not a *universal* truth, based upon the nature of reason; instead, it was a truth *for us*, based upon the way in which we, as individuals, thought and felt at the time we asserted it. We may have made an error, but we deceived no one—neither ourselves nor others. Now let us also suppose that since the time of making our original assertion we have either advanced in our own investigations and have brought our individual way of thinking into closer approximation to the universal and necessary way of thinking, or else others have pointed out to us our previous error. Thus the materially identical proposition, which was previously a formal truth for us, is now, and for the same reason, a formal error, and if we are true to ourselves we will abandon it at once.

[2]See the "deduction" of this law in the first lecture "Concerning the Scholar's Vocation," above, Section IV.

But in doing so we have to recognize that we made a mistake and perhaps that someone else has seen further in this matter than we have. But if our interest in truth is not pure or strong enough, we will continue for
VIII,346 as long as we can to defend ourselves against the conviction which presses itself upon us. When this happens then we are no longer concerned with the form, but rather with the content of the proposition. We defend it because it is ours and because a vain fame means more to us than truth.

Perhaps some opinion flatters our pride or our arrogance or our wish to dominate others. If someone shakes this opinion by means of the strongest reasons, to which we are unable to reply, will we allow ourselves to be convinced? If so, then we must either abandon our illegitimate claims or else recognize that we are being deliberately wrong. Presumably, we will protect ourselves as long as we can against this conviction, and in every secret hiding place of our heart we will seek some pretext for avoiding it.

A second impediment to the pure interest in truth is mental inertia, an aversion to the effort involved in reflection. By nature man is a representing being,[3] but no more than this. In the same way that nature determines the connections between the parts of man's body, it determines the sequence of his representations. Like his body, his mind is a machine; it is just a different type of machine, a representing machine, which is determined by external influences and by its own internal, necessary laws of nature. It is possible to know much, to study much, to read much, to hear much, and still to be no more than a machine. One can let authors or orators go to work upon one, while one remains in a state of comfortable repose, observing the way one representation succeeds another. Exactly like those oriental weaklings who allow their joints to be massaged in their baths by specially trained practitioners, such persons allow their minds to be massaged by practitioners of another sort, and the pleasure of the latter is not much nobler than the pleasure of the former.

It is contrary to uncultivated nature actively to resist our blind inclinations; it requires effort and renunciation to intervene in the mechanical sequence of ideas, to take command of it and freely to direct it toward a specific goal and not to deviate from this direction until the goal has been attained.

VIII,347 Every passive surrender is contrary to the interest in truth. What prompts such a surrender is not truth or falsity, but merely the amusement we obtain from any variation in our representations. Nor can we

[3] "ein vorstellendes Wesen," i.e., a being who is conscious, not of "things in themselves," but of "representations." This paragraph emphasizes the essentially *passive* character of representational consciousness.

attain the truth in this way, for truth is a unity, and [as such] it must be generated actively and freely, by means of exertion and the application of one's own strength. Even if, by a lucky accident, we were actually to hit in this passive way upon some representations which were true in themselves, they would, nevertheless, not be true *for us,* for we would not have used our own reflections to convince ourselves of their truth.

Both of these bad habits are combined in the sort of persons who shun inquiry out of fear that it will disturb their repose and upset their beliefs. What could be more unworthy of a rational being than such an evasion? On the one hand, such persons' repose and beliefs might be well founded. But if this is the case, then what do they have to fear from inquiry? Their cause can only gain from being clearly illuminated. Perhaps they are only afraid of our fallacious arguments and persuasive skills? But if they have not heard our arguments and do not wish to hear them, then how can they know that they are fallacious? Surely they are confident that their own understanding can dispel any false illusions opposed to their convictions, since they are confident that their understanding can do what is far more difficult, namely, that it is able to discover the only pure truth which is possible and that it has done so without engaging in any special reflection. The other possibility is that such persons' repose and beliefs are unfounded. But if this is the case then they do not care whether or not they are well founded, just so long as their sweet comfort remains undisturbed. They are not concerned about truth at all; all they want is to be allowed to continue to consider true that which they have previously held to be true—whether out of habit or because the content of this truth flatters their inertia and depravity. Perhaps this allows them to continue to hope that they can become virtuous and happy without doing anything about it themselves, or even to hope that they can become happy without being virtuous. Perhaps this gives them the hope of
VIII,348 enjoying all sorts of things without having to do anything and of allowing others to do their work for them when they wish to be lazy and degenerate.

All interests of this sort are spurious, and the first step toward increasing the pure interest in truth is to eradicate all such interests. The second step is to surrender oneself to every pleasure offered by the pure interest in truth. *Truth in itself,* merely insofar as it consists in the total harmony of all our thinking, provides us with pleasure—a pure, noble, and elevated pleasure at that.

Only a mean-souled person is indifferent to whether he errs or possesses the truth about something, no matter how insignificant the object in question may be. It is not a question here of the content and consequences of a proposition; rather, it is only a question of unity and harmony in the entire system of the human mind. Man *ought to* be at one with himself; he *ought to* constitute a single whole which exists for its own

sake: only if this is so is he a human being. Consequently, when we are conscious that our thinking is completely in agreement with itself, or even when we are conscious of honestly striving for such self-harmony, we are immediately conscious of affirming our human dignity, and this immediate consciousness affords us a certain moral pleasure.

By striving in this way and by means of the harmony which this striving produces, one attests that he is an autonomous being who is independent of everything that is not his own self. One comes to share in the following lofty feeling: "I am what I am, because this is what I willed to be. I could have let the wheels of necessity carry me away. I could have allowed my convictions to be determined by the impressions I received from nature, or by the tendency of my passions and inclinations, or by the opinions which my contemporaries wanted to impart to me. But this is not what I willed. I have torn myself free. On my own, I have directed my inquiries in a direction which I decided on by myself. I now find
VIII,349 myself at this specific point, which I reached by myself, thanks to my own decisions and my own strength." One comes to share in the lofty feeling: "I will always be what I am now, because this is what I will always will to be. The *content* of my convictions will naturally change as my inquiries continue, but I am not concerned with this content. The *form* of my convictions will never alter. I will never allow sensibility or anything else external to me to have any influence upon the development of my way of thinking. I will always remain at one with myself, no matter how far my horizon may extend, because I will always will to be at one with myself."

This strict, sharp distinction between the pure self and everything which is not the self is the basic characteristic of mankind. The degree of our humanity determines the strength and the scope of our feeling of our own self, and this in turn determines all of our dignity and happiness.

The resolute friend of truth proceeds undisturbed along the path of inquiry, accompanied by the sure conviction that he will always remain at one with himself. He bravely confronts anything which he might encounter along this path. A person who is not yet entirely at one with himself, and thus does not know what he really seeks and really wants, is extremely disconcerted when he encounters along his path propositions which contradict all of his previous opinions and those of his contemporaries and predecessors. This anxiousness is certainly one of the chief causes of mankind's slow progress along the path toward truth. But anyone who seeks the truth for its own sake is completely free of any anxiety of this sort. He stares boldly into the face of every conclusion, no matter how astonishing it may appear. The question is not whether the conclusion seems astonishing or familiar, or whether it contradicts his and all previous opinions. Instead, the question is whether, to the best of

his knowledge, this conclusion agrees with the laws of thinking. And this is what he is going to investigate. Should this conclusion turn out to be in agreement with the laws of thinking, then he will accept it as a sacred and venerable truth. Should it turn out not to be in agreement with these laws, then he will dismiss it as an error—not because it contradicts a
VIII,350 common opinion, but because, to the best of his knowledge, it contradicts the laws of thinking. Until he has decided this issue he remains quite indifferent toward the conclusion in question. He has raised no question concerning the content of this conclusion. He is already acquainted with that; what must still be investigated is its form.

With this cool calm and firm resolve, the friend of truth examines the tumult of human opinions, including his own bright ideas and doubts. Things whirl and rage *around him,* but not *within him.* He calmly observes the storm from his impregnable citadel. At the proper time he will quell the storm, and one after another the waves will abate. All that he wants is to be in harmony with himself, and to the extent that he has made any progress so far he has produced such harmony. His opinions in some areas will still be confused, but this is not his fault, for he has not yet gotten to those areas. But he will reach them as well, and then this disorder will resolve itself into the most beautiful order.

What then would be the worst thing that could happen to him? Suppose that the final result of his striving for truth should turn out to be the discovery that there is no truth and certainty at all—either because this is entailed by the limitations of finite reason as such (which is an impossible conclusion) or because it is entailed by the limitations of his individuality. He would still resign himself to this, the worst fate that could befall him. For though he would certainly be unhappy, he would not be guilty. He would be conscious of having inquired honestly, and this consciousness would substitute for happiness, which could therefore still be his.

Though it is hardly worth mentioning, the resolute friend of truth remains equally calm about what *other persons* will say about his convictions at first, should he find himself in a situation where he has to share these with them. And this is the situation in which the scholar always finds himself, since he does not conduct his inquiries merely for himself, but for others as well. The question is certainly not whether we agree with others in our thinking, but only whether we agree with ourselves. If we achieve the latter, then we can be sure that we will achieve the former without even trying and without first having to take a poll; that is, we will be in agreement with every other person who is in agreement with
VIII,351 himself. We can be sure of this, because reason is the same in all rational beings. We do not know how *others* think, and we cannot base our own thinking upon the way that they think. But we can discover how *we* ought to think if we wish to think rationally, and every rational being

ought to think as we ought to think. All inquiry must start within and proceed outward, rather than the reverse. *I* ought not to think as *others* do; instead, I ought to assume that others think in the way that *I* ought to think. Would it really be a goal worthy of a rational being to agree with those who are not in agreement with themselves?

The feeling of the *strength* that we have exerted on behalf of formal truth furnishes us with a pleasure which is pure, noble, and lasting.

Nothing but that which is ours and which we have acquired by the worthy employment of our own freedom can furnish such a pleasure. Things which have been conferred upon us from without and without any help from us do not furnish any pure personal satisfaction. Such things are not ours and may be taken from us again in the same way that they were given to us. The pleasure we take in things of this sort is not a pleasure in ourselves, a pleasure in our own merit and dignity. This is particularly true in the case of intellectual power.[4] What people call "a good head," or "native talent," or "a fortunate natural endowment" is not a source of rational personal satisfaction, since this does not involve anything which one has earned. If I had been granted a more sensitive and active disposition, and if, from my birth, my disposition had been more strongly and expeditiously cultivated, what would *I* have contributed to all of this? Did I design my own disposition? Did I select it from among others and make it my own? Did I plan and guide those influences which I encountered at birth?

My power is *mine* only insofar as it is something which I have produced through my own free will. But with respect to my power, all that I can freely produce is the direction in which it is applied. And thus true intellectual power consists in this choice of direction. Blind power is not power at all; on the contrary, it is weakness. But I can freely direct this power, and the rule which guides my freedom is the following: Always act in agreement with yourself. Until I have done this my power remains
VIII,352 something foreign to me, the power of will-less and aimless nature residing within me.

This intellectual power is strengthened and increased through use. And we derive pleasure from such an increase in our power, because it is something we have earned. It provides us with the elevating consciousness that is expressed in the following words: "I was a machine, and I could have remained one. Motivated by myself and by means of my own strength, I have made myself into an autonomous being. It is thanks to myself that I now progress easily and freely toward my own goal and can venture resolutely, freely, and boldly upon any inquiry. Thanks to myself I undertake what I have to undertake with self-confi-

[4] "Geisteskraft."

dence and courage. Thanks to myself I can set to work with the hope of success."

Moral ability is strengthened along with intellectual power, which is itself something moral. The two are intimately connected and affect each other reciprocally. The love of truth prepares the way for moral goodness; considered in itself, it is already a type of moral goodness. By freely subordinating to the laws of thinking all of our inclinations, our favorite opinions, our motives, and everything lying outside of ourselves, we accustom ourselves to bowing down and growing silent before the idea of law as such. Such free subordination is itself a moral action. When sensibility dominates, the interest in truth is weakened to the same degree as the interest in ethics. The victory which the interest in truth wins over sensibility is at the same time a victory for virtue. When the mind or spirit is free in *any* respect, this liberates it in all other respects. The person who, in exploring for truth, disdains everything outside of himself will learn a similar disdain in all of his actions. Resolute thinking necessarily leads to moral goodness and strength.

I will add nothing designed to make palpable the dignity of this way of thinking. Merely describing it will make anyone capable of thinking in this way sensible to its dignity. Anyone who fails to sense this dignity will never become acquainted with this way of thinking.

VII

Outline of the Distinctive Character of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty

Editor's Preface

Though issued as an independent publication in the summer of 1795, Fichte's *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen* is in fact an integral part of the full-scale presentation of his new system which he began to articulate in his lectures and publications during his first year in Jena. More specifically, it is an essential supplement to the better-known *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* and can be appreciated and understood only in conjunction with the latter work.

For his first semester at Jena, Fichte announced two courses of "private" lectures: Concerning Theoretical Philosophy and General Practical Philosophy.[1] Though the summer semester would not begin until the end of May, he began to plan his courses in the early spring of 1794. Among other things, he needed to find appropriate textbooks for the advanced philosophy students who would be attending his "private" lectures. By the beginning of March he had considered the available texts and had reached a bold decision—one that would have consequences more fateful for his career and reputation than any he could have foreseen at the time. He announced his decision in a letter to his friend Böttiger:

> I can now see for myself something which I have known for some time, namely, how inconvenient for teacher and student alike it is to have to

[1]Regarding the title General Practical Philosophy, Fichte explained (in a letter to K. A. Böttiger, April 2, 1794), "N.B. *general,* because in my system practical philosophy becomes something very different than it has ever been before." In addition to these two "private" courses (which were supposed to meet five days a week) Fichte also scheduled a series of weekly "public" lectures, which were open to the entire university community. See above, Sections IV, V, and VI.

> lecture without a textbook. This only serves to encourage the sort of thoughtless note taking which I would like to abolish entirely—at least so far as my own lectures are concerned. None of the available texts by Kant or Reinhold suits my purpose, nor can I write a textbook of my own between now and the end of next month. Thus the following expedient occurred to me: what if I were to distribute my textbook in installments during the course *as a manuscript for the use of my listeners* (since I absolutely wish to delay for a few years any presentation of my system to the public at large)? In any event, I would like to defy the usual sneers which greet printed texts that are supposed to be treated as manuscripts. Isn't this the same as when a professor reads from his *own lecture notes?* In order to show that I am serious about this, the text should not be published in a regular trade edition at all, but should be distributed *only on my instructions* to my students and others whom I might designate to receive it.[2]

By the time the semester had begun, however, Fichte. who had never held an academic position before, realized that he would not have sufficient time to prepare two new lectures every day of the week—in addition to his weekly "public" lecture on "Morality for Scholars." In the end, therefore, he taught only one "private" course within the philosophy department during the summer semester. Between six and seven o'clock every weekday morning he delivered his lectures on "Theoretical Philosophy," and, in accordance with his previously announced plan, he wrote out the text of his remarks in advance and had them printed and distributed to the students in several installments throughout the semester. These printed texts were often "hot off the press," since Fichte had had no time to prepare his lectures in advance of his arrival at Jena.[3] Working at a genuinely hectic pace, he began the first public presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* little more than half a year after the original idea for the new system had occurred to him (in the final months of 1793). Though he had some earlier sketches and plans to work from, nev-

[2]Fichte to Böttiger, March 1, 1794.

[3]Some idea of the pressure under which Fichte was working during the summer semester may be gained from his letter to Goethe of June 21, 1794. Concerning the first installments of the *Foundations,* which accompanied the letter, Fichte remarked: "I do not know whether I can yet claim to have provided a clear presentation of these matters, but I do know that if I had the requisite time I could achieve greater clarity—as much, in fact, as could ever be desired. Taking into account my public lectures, I have to fill at least three printer's sheets each week, quite apart from any other business. I expect your indulgence on this account" (see below, Section X, no. 11). A few months later, Fichte was again appealing for Goethe's indulgence in judging later installments of the same text and was still blaming the infelicities in the text upon "the demanding circumstances in which they were written. No sooner had one sheet been read through than another one *had* to appear, and thus I *was forced* to let it go" (Fichte to Goethe, September 30, 1794). That Fichte's situation did not improve much in the following few years may be surmised from the similar complaints in his letter to Reinhold, August 27, 1796 (quoted in note 41 to the editor's introduction).

ertheless his conception of the overall structure and detailed articulation of the whole was by no means firm when he began to prepare his "private" lectures for the summer semester. Fichte's conception of his own system did not cease to evolve during his first year at Jena, but because of the manner in which he had elected to deliver his presentation, any second thoughts he may have had about previously published portions could not be reflected in those texts themselves. One section had to be finished and in press before the next section could even be drafted.

Though he had hoped to complete his presentation of the "Foundations of the Entire *Wissenschaftslehre*" during his first semester, this hope proved overly ambitious, and only by enormous effort was he able to complete an exposition of the "First Principles" and "Theoretical Part" of his new system. Moreover, despite his earlier, explicit resolve to the contrary, he authorized Christian Gabler, the local publisher who brought out all of the books Fichte published while at Jena, to prepare a trade edition of the completed portion of his text. On Fichte's instructions, the printed pages previously distributed for his course on "Theoretical Philosophy" were bound together in a single volume, which was then published in autumn 1794 as *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, Parts I and II. At the same time Fichte announced that the entire text of the *Foundations* would soon be available ("after the autumn book fair") and that "the present *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* will be followed by the publication next Easter of *detailed systems* of the theoretical and practical *Wissenschaftslehre*."[4]

The next semester (i.e., the winter semester of 1794–95) Fichte offered two courses of "private" lectures: one devoted to "Theoretical Philosophy" and another to "Practical Philosophy." However, the final part of the *Foundations* did not appear as promised in 1794, nor were separate treatises on the theoretical and practical portions of the system published in the spring of 1795. The growing controversies in which Fichte was embroiled during the winter semester of 1794–95 probably forced him to postpone his publication plans. Indeed, he was forced to cancel his public lecture series prior to the end of the semester and did not teach at all during the following summer semester, which he spent in self-enforced exile in the nearby village of Osmannstädt.[5]

[4]This announcement was published in the October 1, 1794, "Intelligenzblatt" of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. It is reprinted in *AA* I, 2: 183, and is translated above, in the editor's introduction.

[5]Though the evidence is ambiguous, one may surmise that at least some of the sheets of Part II of the *Foundations* and perhaps even portions of the text of the *Outline* were distributed in fascicles to the students in Fichte's classes during the winter semester. In the "report" Fichte sent to the Weimar official, C. G. Voigt, on August 28, 1795, explaining his decision to leave Jena in the wake of the controversy over the student orders, he refers to "two manuscripts" on which he was working when the crisis erupted (see "J. G. Fichte's Rechenschaft an das Publikum über seine Entfernung von Jena in dem Sommerhalbjahre

Part III of the *Foundations* finally appeared in print nearly a year after the publication of Parts I and II. Titled "Foundations of the Science of the Practical," this concluding portion of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* was published, along with a preface to the entire work, at the end of July or beginning of August 1795. Though Part III was initially released by itself as the "second installment" of the *Foundations,* by mid-September Gabler was advertising a one-volume edition of the entire text.

The publication of the conclusion of the *Foundations* coincided with that of the long-promised specificially "theoretical" work[6] (though a premature announcement of the latter's publication had appeared in the April 15, 1795, issue of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*). The treatise, which finally appeared at the end of July or beginning of August, bore the cumbersome title *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty,* and, as with the previously published portions of the *Foundations,* the title page carried a clear reminder that the author wished the *Outline* to be treated as "a manuscript for the use of his students."

Though the *Outline* was issued as a separate publication, it was never intended to be read or evaluated on its own. Indeed, taken by itself, the text is hardly intelligible. From the start it was plainly intended to be read in conjunction with the *Foundations.* Moreover, the *Outline* represents less of an extension of the *Wissenschaftslehre* into new fields than an essential supplement to the previously published text. It covers some of the same material found in Part II of the *Foundations,* but treats it in a different way and from a different perspective. Indeed, it is hard to resist the conclusion that, if Fichte had not been forced by circumstances

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1795," in *AA* II, 3: 433–34). Presumably the "two manuscripts" were the *Outline* and Part III of the *Foundations,* which would correspond to the two "private" courses Fichte was teaching during the winter semester. It is difficult, however, to determine precisely when either text was completed. Fichte's correspondence during the spring and summer of 1795 contains several complaints about delays in printing the *Outline* and Part III of the *Foundations* (see Fichte to Reinhold, April 28 and July 2, 1795, translated below, Section X, Nos. 14 and 16; see too his May 8, 1795, letter to Lavater).

[6]If the *Outline* was the previously announced "theoretical system" of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* one might well wonder what happened to the detailed "practical system" Fichte had announced at the same time. Perhaps the text Fichte had in mind was Part III of the *Foundations,* though this possibility would be difficult to reconcile with the sentence (included in the October 1, 1794, announcement) promising to complete the publication of the *Foundations* prior to the beginning of the winter semester. Or perhaps the announcement refers instead to a projected but never written companion piece to the *Outline,* a separate text which would deal with "the distinctive character of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in respect of the practical faculty." But it is more likely that what Fichte had in mind was a plan for extending the *Wissenschaftslehre* into the "practical" spheres of ethics and the theory of natural rights. At any rate, this was precisely the direction in which he developed his system during the immediately ensuing semesters.

of his own choosing to distribute the sections of the *Foundations* as they were printed, he would have entirely revised the second part and would have incorporated therein the contents of the *Outline.* The intimate connection between the *Foundations* and the *Outline* is clearly spelled out at the beginning of the latter text. So that readers of the *Foundations* might be aware of this same connection, Fichte called explicit attention to it in the preface he wrote for the first complete edition of the *Foundations.* This preface (dated Easter 1794) makes it clear that the *Foundations* should be read in conjunction with the *Outline.*[7] Thus it was entirely appropriate that, when Gabler's single-volume edition of the *Foundations* became available in mid-September 1795, it was offered as part of a package, which included both the *Outline* and the complete *Foundations* at a single price.

By 1799 the first edition of the *Foundations* had been entirely sold out, and Gabler was pressing Fichte to authorize a new edition, to consist of the corrected text of the first edition plus a new preface. By this time Fichte was living in Berlin and was hard at work on a new version of his system, for which he had already made publication arrangements with the Tübingen publisher J. C. Cotta. Despite having often expressed his own deep misgivings about the first published presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre,*[8] and even though he expected to publish a completely new, full-scale exposition of the same within a year or two, Fichte nevertheless agreed to Gabler's proposal, but only with the stipulation that he would receive in advance all of his author's royalties—as well as any outstanding royalties Gabler still owed him on other titles.

Negotiations over the financial terms for publishing the new edition continued slowly over the next year, and Fichte went so far as to send Gabler a list of corrections and minor changes to be incorporated in the second edition of the *Foundations.* In the end however, the parties were unable to reach a satisfactory agreement, and Fichte withdrew his permission for Gabler to publish a new edition of his earlier treatise. Meanwhile, he had become convinced that a reissue of both the *Foundations* and the *Outline* would be desirable and proposed such a project to his new publisher. Thus, in January 1802 Cotta brought out a new edition of the *Foundations* and the *Outline* in a single volume. In this new edition, these two texts were not treated as separate publications, but as parts of a

[7]"In the present work, together with my *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty,* I think I have carried my system to the point where any intelligent reader may have a complete view, not only of its foundation and extent, but also of the manner in which further construction must be erected upon it" (preface to the first edition of *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,* in *SW,* I: 87; *H/L,* p. 90).

[8]Regarding Fichte's dissatisfaction with the *Foundations,* see above, editor's introduction, note 75.

single whole. This is reflected in the title page, which bears the compound title *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre and Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty*. On Fichte's explicit instructions, the subtitle "a manuscript for the use of his listeners" was dropped. The text was unaltered, except for the correction of typographical and orthographic errors in the first edition and the addition of a brief new preface.[9]

As Fichte's response to Gabler's original proposal suggests, the decision to authorize a new edition of the *Foundations* was dictated at least in part by practical (that is, financial) considerations. But there were other considerations as well. For all of its deficiencies, the *Foundations* was universally regarded as Fichte's chief work, and as such surely deserved to be in print. Moreover, Fichte thought that readers of any new version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* would be interested in the relationship between the newer and older versions of his system and, indeed, might well benefit from having two, entirely different expositions of the same system. As he explained to his new publisher, "no one who really wants to study the new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* will find it easy to dispense with this first presentation, which will also be referred to throughout the new presentation."[10] But the clearest statement of Fichte's reasons for reissuing the text is found in the brief preface he wrote for the new edition, translated here in full.

> In the course of preparing a new presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* it has again become clear to the creator of this science that, for the time being, no new presentation will be able to make this first presentation superfluous

[9]A certain amount of confusion is caused by the fact that there exist *two*, slightly different, second editions of the *Foundations* and *Outline*. In addition to Cotta's one-volume edition, the two works were also reissued separately by Gabler, the publisher of the original editions. To add to the confusion, Gabler's (unauthorized) second editions also appeared in January 1802, less than a week after the publication of Cotta's new edition. There appears to have been a genuine misunderstanding between Fichte and Gabler over the new editions of the *Foundations* and *Outline*—a project originally proposed to Fichte by Gabler himself, only to bog down in unresolved financial negotiations. Whereas Fichte believed that he had canceled his agreement with Gabler, the publisher continued to believe that he retained Fichte's authorization to issue new editions of both books. Fichte, who had meanwhile authorized Cotta to reissue both earlier works in a single volume, made an unsuccessful last-minute attempt to prevent the appearance of Gabler's new editions. Though Gabler advertised his new editions as "improved," the changes from the first editions were very minor. Gabler's new edition of the *Foundations* included some small changes Fichte had proposed in 1800 (when he still expected Gabler would be the publisher of the second edition), but did not include the new preface Fichte had written for Cotta's one-volume edition. The rest of the changes in Gabler's new edition of the *Foundations*, and all of the changes in the new edition of the *Outline*, were orthographic and typographical. Cotta was understandably irritated by Gabler's action, and Fichte himself was sufficiently embarrassed and angered to bring suit against his former publisher, thereby initiating complicated legal proceedings which dragged on for years.

[10]Fichte to Cotta, August 8, 1801.

and unnecessary. The majority of the philosophical public still does not seem so well prepared for this new point of view that they will find it useless to have the same contents available in two very different forms, nor will it be useless for them to learn to recognize this identity of content for themselves. Moreover, the method which will be observed in the new presentation (a method which has been designed for greater comprehensibility) will lead one back to the very path followed in the presentation at hand—which, pending the future appearance of a strictly scientific presentation, will always be a very good thing. Finally, this exposition presents several cardinal points with a detailed precision and clarity which the author has no hope of ever being able to surpass. In the new presentation it will thus be necessary to make reference to several passages of this sort.

For these reasons we are making available a new, unaltered edition of this first presentation, which had been completely sold out.

The new presentation will be published next year.[11]

Plainly the *Outline* is a work that can be understood and should be analyzed only in conjunction with the *Foundations*. And even then, the *Outline* remains one of Fichte's most abstract and challenging works. Accordingly, an adequate analysis or interpretation of this text cannot be provided within the compass of this brief preface. Instead, let us consider what Fichte himself had to say about the subject matter and importance of the *Outline* and, specifically, about its precise relationship to Part II of the *Foundations*.

The "Theoretical Portion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" or "*Wissenschaftslehre* with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty" is by no means the whole of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Instead, it is Fichte's name for the portion of the whole that explicitly deals with and explains the conditions necessary for the possibility of *knowledge*. That is, it deals with the "theoretical attitude," an attitude that presupposes the classical division between the knowing subject (the theoretical I, or "intellect") and the object known (the not-I, or "the world"), and it seeks to understand how experience of the latter is possible. The theoretical portion of the system does not explain how such an attitide is itself possible, nor does it explain the relationship between the limited, theoretical I and the unlimitied self-actualizing I with which the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* begins. However critical these issues are for the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a whole, they lie outside the special province of "theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre*." Such a theoretical inquiry *starts* with the proposition, "the I posits itself as determined by

[11] *SW*, I: 85. This short preface, dated "Berlin, August, 1801," is not included in *H/L* and is here translated into English for the first time. The promised "New Presentation" of the *Wissenschaftslehre* did not appear in 1802. Though Fichte continued tirelessly to revise and recast his system, the version of 1794–95 remained the only full-scale presentation of the first principles of the *Wissenschaftslehre* to appear during his lifetime. For information on later manuscript versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, see above, editor's introduction, note 74.

the not-I," and its task is to describe and to deduce the *specific manner* in which the I posits itself as externally determined. A theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre,* therefore, does not have to provide a deduction of the not-I; what it must explain instead is how a not-I is present to and represented by a knowing subject.

Even thus limited, the program of the theoretical portion of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is very ambitious. And it is not surprising that Fichte was less than fully satisfied with his first exposition of this program (in Part II of the *Foundations*). "The conclusion of my prospectus [*Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*] as well as the theoretical portion of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* are extremely obscure," he confessed to Reinhold. "I know very well that the *Wissenschaftslehre* contains within itself an intrinsic element which makes it obscure and even incomprehensible to many people. . . . However, I hope that the practical part of the *Foundations,* together with a work of mine specifically devoted to theory, will help to make things clearer."[12]

But the "work specifically devoted to theory" which Fichte eventually published is not simply a revised version of the earlier text. The *Outline* is concerned primarily with matters barely mentioned in the former work. Part II of the *Foundations* explores the problem of how the I is able to posit for itself the fact of its own limitation, and thus concludes with a general "Deduction of Representation," whereas the *Outline* provides a much more detailed investigation of the *specific* character of the general fact (viz., the fact of representation) deduced in the theoretical portion of the *Foundations.* And we discover in the course of this investigation that every representation must be *particular* and that no particular representation can exist apart from some reference to *other* representations. Thus representations constitute a sensory manifold of interrelated intuitions. When we inquire further into *how* these intuitions are related to each other (i.e., into the "form" of the manifold of intuition), we discover that they are arranged alongside each other in space and before and after each other in time. If they are not related to each other in these ways, then they cannot be determined to be particular intuitions at all. And if they cannot be so distinguished, then they cannot be represented by the I, which in turn would be unable to posit itself as determined by the not-I (as required by the first principle of the theoretical portion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*).

In other words, Fichte's *Outline* attempts to provide a deduction of those "facts of experience" that previously investigators, notably Kant, had simply assumed and with which the *Critique of Pure Reason* begins: space, time, and the manifold of intuition.[13] Part II of the *Foundations*

[12]Fichte to Reinhold, April 28, 1795. Translated below, Section X, no. 14.

[13]See the "Concluding Remark" to the *Outline.* One way to characterize the difference between Part II of the *Foundations* and the *Outline* is to note that the former text is more concerned with displaying the relationship between the *Wissenschaftslehre* and Reinhold's

showed that the I can posit itself as determined by the not-I only insofar as, on the occasion of a "check" on its activity (present to the I as a "feeling"), its own productive power of imagination converts brute "feelings" into representations of a world. The *Outline* carries this investigation an additional step forward and demonstrates that any world of experience must be a world of distinct things in space and time. Rather than being taken for granted, space, time, and the manifold of intuition are thus derived from the first principle of the theoretical portion of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

This helps explain Fichte's deliberately chosen, if awkward, title for his theoretical treatise. For the *Outline* is by no means intended to provide a complete account of the possibility of knowledge or a full analysis of the "theoretical faculty"; it deals only with those aspects of the same which are "distinctive" features of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Not only is the *Outline* to be read in conjunction with the *Foundations,* it is also meant to be interpreted in the context of the prior achievements of Kant and Reinhold. Indeed, by showing *why* the I must posit for itself a world of representations, and by showing *why* this same world must appear as a manifold of spatially and temporally interrelated intuitions, the *Wissenschaftslehre* provides a genetic deduction of—and thus provides a foundation for—those "facts of consciousness" presupposed at the start of the Critical and Elementary philosophies. Nowhere is this feature of Fichte's enterprise made clearer than in the following passage from a letter Fichte wrote to Reinhold just prior to the publication of the *Outline:*

> Perhaps the following will show most clearly the relationship of my system to yours and Kant's. Kant seeks to discover the basis for that unity of the manifold [which is observed] in the not-I. How do you combine *A, B, C,* etc.—*which are already given*—to form the unity of consciousness? . . . I believe it need only be said to be understood that this question presupposes another . . . : "How do you first arrive at *A* and *B* and *C*?" They are *given.* In plain language this means, does it not, that *you do not know?* Very well then, either prove to me that you cannot know this and why you cannot know it, or else do not speak to me about philosophy as a science as long as you do not know. At the proper time we will indeed inquire into how you may unite *A* and *B,* etc. But *A for itself* and the *subject* are also distinct, are they not? The first question, then, is how do you unite these [i.e., *A* and the subject]? When we know this, your second, subordinate question will be easy to answer. For you will undoubtedly absorb *B* just as you absorbed *A.* And

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Elementary Philosophy, whereas the latter text is more concerned to show the connection between Fichte's version of transcendental idealism and Kant's Critical Philosophy. Fichte's debt to Reinhold, whose Elementary Philosophy had served as a foil for developing the *Wissenschaftslehre* (see the editor's preface to Section I, above), was great. But by 1795 he was anxious to show the independence of his own system from Reinhold's, which is one of the reasons for the many references to Kant in the text of the *Outline.*

once *A* is in the subject and *B* is absorbed into *the same subject,* then *B* will undoubtedly join *A* as a result. . . . This makes my path much easier and shorter than Kant's.

The surprising result is now revealed (a result which particularly comes to light in the deduction of time and space in my brief *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty*): namely, that there is no *A* which is absorbed first, nor can there be. Instead, however high one ascends, something higher is always presupposed. For example, every intuition is necessarily posited in the *present* point in time, but there is no *present* point in time without a *past* one. Hence there is also no present intuition without a past intuition to which it is joined, and there is no first moment, no beginning of consciousness. This proves what Kant presupposed—that the not-I is necessarily manifold. This also indicates why this great thinker, who surely penetrated those very depths the *Wissenschaftslehre* is trying to plumb, began his treatment of the not-I precisely at the point that he did. We, however, should no longer let the matter rest there.[14]

The text of *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen* upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW,* I: 331–411 (*AA* I, 3: 137–208).

[14]Fichte to Reinhold, July 2, 1795 (translated in full below, Section X, no. 16).

Outline of the Distinctive Character of the *Wissenschaftslehre* with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty

I,331 ## §1. The Concept of the Specifically Theoretical Part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*

For the purpose of establishing the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre*,[1] we began (in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) with the proposition: *the I posits itself as determined by the not-I.* We examined how and in what manner something corresponding to this proposition could be thought to be originally present in a rational being. After separating and setting aside everything impossible and contradictory, we found what we were looking for; that is, we discovered the only possible way in which something corresponding to this proposition could be conceived to be present in a rational being. For just as it is certain that this proposition should now be considered valid and that it can be considered valid only in the way already shown, it is also certain that this proposition must be originally present in our mind as a fact.[2] The fact

The title page of the original edition includes the note, "a manuscript for his students."

[1]The section title is "Begriff der besonderen theoretischen Wissenschaftslehre," more literally translated: "Concept of the Particular Theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre*." Concerning the general character of a "theoretical" *Wissenschaftslehre*, as well as the first principle of the same, see Part II of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, *SW*, I: 123–246. (*H/L*, pp. 120–217). Regarding the peculiar title of the first paragraph of the *Outline*, Wilhelm G. Jacobs argues: "The title of paragraph 1 . . . does not indicate that we are here concerned with a particular [*besonderen*] part of the theoretical *Wissenschaftslehre;* instead, it indicates that here we are concerned with a discussion of the element of the particular [*des Besonderen*] within theoretical knowledge. The proper task of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in relation to the theoretical faculty is to demonstrate that the object of theoretical knowledge must always be something determinate, or, as Fichte says, something particular [*ein besonderer*]." See Jacobs's introduction to the Philosophische Bibliothek edition of Fichte's *Grundriss des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1975), p. ix.

[2]"*Factum.*" That is, it is certain that there must be some fact about our minds to which this proposition refers.

thus postulated was the following: Upon the occasion of the check[3] on the original activity of the I (a check which remains completely inexplicable and incomprehensible at this point), the imagination, which is suspended between the original direction of the I's activity and the [opposing] direction which arises from reflection,[4] produces something which is composed of both directions. Since nothing can be found in the I which the I has not posited within itself (which follows from the concept of the I), the I must posit the fact in question within itself. That is, it must originally explain this fact to itself; it must completely determine it and establish its foundation.[5]

The theoretical part of a *Wissenschaftslehre* is, as such, a system of those facts which appear in the mind of a rational being in the course of this original explanation of the fact in question. This original explanation
I,332 comprises reason's theoretical capacity. I intentionally said, "the *original* explanation of this fact." The fact is present in us without conscious participation on our part. It is explained, again without any conscious participation on our part, solely by and in accordance with the laws and nature of a rational being. The various distinguishable elements in this process of explanation constitute new facts. Reflection is turned upon this original fact, and this is what I call the "original explanation." The conscious, scientific explanation which we undertake when we engage in transcendental philosophy is something totally different. In this latter type of explanation, reflection is turned upon the original explanation of the first fact in order to establish this first explanation scientifically.

[3]"Anstoss." Concerning this "check," see the discussion in the *Foundations, SW,* I: 212–18 (H/L, pp. 191–95).

[4]"die zwischen der ursprüngliche Richtung dieser Thätigkeit, und der durch die Reflexion entstandenen—schwebenden Einbildungskraft." Regarding *schweben*—"to be suspended," "to hover," "to oscillate"—as an activity of the productive imagination, see *Foundations, SW,* I: 216–17 (*H/L,* p. 194).

[5]One of Fichte's recently published notebooks containing his lecture notes for his "introductory" course Logic and Metaphysics also contains a few pages of fragmentary commentary on the text of the *Grundriss* (complete with specific page references to the first edition). These "comments," which Fichte presumably prepared for use in conjunction with his lectures on the *Wissenschaftslehre* in the winter semester of 1795–96, are limited to the first few sections of the *Grundriss.* The more interesting portions of Fichte's commentary are translated in these notes, beginning with the following comment on §1:

"§1 is, of course, to be treated as an overview.

"(1) Everything that appears within consciousness is a *product of the imagination.* (What is it that people who wonder so much about this assertion really want? The thing in itself is surely not supposed to exist within us; nor, as it were, is a 'representation in itself' or the like [supposed to exist in us]. We must certainly produce what is in us.)

"(2) [Everything that appears within consciousness] is *determinate* or *grasped by means of concepts.* Everything depends on this. Now for knowledge of the universe.

"(3) Even the philosopher explains this act of production by referring to a *check.* This is now quite comprehensible. As we have seen, my *activity* is *limited.* This original limitation is a limitation which occurs through duty; every other limitation is, in turn, only a *sensible* presentation of the former—that is, a presentation of it through the imagination" (Fichte, "Kommentar zum *Grundriss des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre,*" *AA* II, 4: 360).

In the "Deduction of Representation"[6] we have already indicated briefly the general way in which the I posits this fact within itself. There we were concerned with explaining this fact *as such,* and we abstracted completely from the explanation of any particular fact pertaining to the concept of representation. That is, we disregarded its explanation qua particular fact.[7]

This was only because we did not—and could not—go into every detail of this explanation. If we had done so, we would have found that no fact of this sort can be completely determined merely as a fact as such; it can be completely determined only if it is determined as a *particular* fact, one which always is and must be determined by another fact of the same type. Consequently the theoretical part of a *Wissenschaftslehre* can be complete only if it is also *particular.* And thus, if we are to proceed consistently in accordance with the rules of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* our presentation of its theoretical part must necessarily be the presentation of a particular theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This is because any such presentation must in due course arrive at a point where one fact of this sort is determined by an opposing fact of the same sort.[8]

A few more words of explanation on this point. Kant starts by presupposing the existence of a *manifold*[9] which may be absorbed into the unity
I,333 of consciousness. Given the standpoint he adopted, this is the only assumption with which he could have begun. Kant thereby established the specific character of the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This is all that he wished to establish, and thus he was justified in proceeding from the particular to the general. It is indeed possible to explain in this manner a collective universal, a whole constituted from previous experience and unified by the application of one set of laws. But an *infinite* universal, an experience which continues into infinity, cannot be explained in this way. No path leads from the finite to the infinite. However, a path does exist which leads in the opposite direction, from undetermined and undeterminable infinity to finitude, via the faculty of determination[10] (everything finite is, accordingly, a product of this determin-

[6]See *Foundations, SW,* I: 228–46 (*H/L,* pp. 203–17).

[7]"p. 2. is rather preliminary. In transcendental philosophy we deduce things from first principles, without reference to any 'fact within consciousness.'

"The previous lecture presentation [viz., the exposition of these issues in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre?*] was *abstract.* That is not to say that it abstracted from *experience,* but the first principles for which I settled there could provide only something abstract" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 360).

[8]"'Determined by another of the same type.' That is, it *must present itself* to us in this way. We are here within the realm of consciousness, and this entire distinction only arises from the *sensible* manner of representing" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 360).

[9]"ein Mannigfaltiges," i.e., a multiplicity of representations. Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason,* A77/B103ff. Also see B135: "For through the 'I' as simple representation, nothing manifold is given; only in intuition, which is distinct from the 'I,' can a manifold be given; and only through *combination* of the manifold in one consciousness can it be thought" (trans. Norman Kemp Smith).

[10]"das Vermögen des Bestimmens," i.e., our native ability to "specify" or to "determine"

ing activity). The *Wissenschaftslehre,* which is supposed to encompass the whole system of the human mind, has to take this path and descend from the general to the particular. It must prove that a *manifold* is given for possible experience. This proof will go as follows: Whatever is must be *something,* but it is something only insofar as there is something else—which is also something, though a different something. As soon as this can be proven we enter the realm of particulars.[11]

The *method* of the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre* has already been described in the *Foundations.* It is simple and easily understood. The thread of the argument proceeds according to the following principle (which is here regulative throughout): *nothing pertains to the I except what it posits within itself.* We begin with the fact derived above, and then we see how the I might be able to posit this fact within itself. This positing is a fact as well, and it must also be posited by the I within itself, and so on, until we arrive at the highest theoretical fact, namely, that fact through which the I (consciously) posits itself as determined by the not-I. Thus the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre* ends with its own first principle. It reverts into itself and is thus completely self-contained.[12]

There may well prove to be characteristic distinctions among the facts
I,334 which we are to derive. Such distinctions would justify us in making divisions among these facts and within the science which they establish. In accordance with the synthetic method, however, such divisions will be made only where there is an obvious basis for doing so.

The acts through which the I posits something within itself are here [treated as] facts, because, as we have just said, they are objects of reflection. However, it does not follow from this that they are what are usually called "facts of consciousness," or that one actually becomes conscious of them as facts of (inner) experience. If consciousness exists, then this is itself a fact, and it must be derived like any other fact. And furthermore, if particular determinations of this consciousness exist, then these must also be derivable and must constitute what are, properly speaking, the facts of consciousness.

On the one hand, it is clear from what has just been said that, as has been often remarked, the *Wissenschaftslehre* should not be reproached if some fact which it has established cannot be encountered in (inner) experience. The *Wissenschaftslehre* makes no such claim; it merely proves the necessity of thinking that something corresponding to a certain thought is present in the human mind. If we are not conscious of the fact in question, the *Wissenschaftslehre* also explains why we could not be:

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one representation in terms of another.

[11] "*Kant* [maintains] *that* it [i.e., the manifold of experience] is given. We [maintain] that is must be given. And only then [i.e., after we have derived it] do we arrive at it" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 361).

[12] "geht in sich selbst zurück, and wird demnach vollkommen beschlossen."

namely, because it is one of those facts which constitute the foundation for the possibility of any consciousness. On the other hand, it is also clear from what has been said that the facts which actually are established as facts of inner experience by the *Wissenschaftslehre* are not established by appealing to the testimony of experience; instead, their deduction establishes them as facts. If the deductions contained in the *Wissenschaftslehre* are correct, then a fact exactly of the sort that has been deduced will certainly be found in experience. If no such fact is to be met with in experience, then the deductions are certainly incorrect. And if this turns out to be the case, the philosopher for his own part will do well to go back and ferret out the false inference which he must have made somewhere. But qua science the *Wissenschaftslehre* is altogether unconcerned
I,335 with experience and does not take it into consideration at all. The *Wissenschaftslehre* would have to be true even if there were no experience at all (though of course in the absence of experience a *Wissenschaftslehre in concreto* would also be impossible, but that does not concern us here). Furthermore, it would be certain a priori that all possible future experience would have to conform to the laws established by the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

§2. First Theorem
The Indicated Fact Is Posited by Means of Sensation, Or, Deduction of Sensation.

I

The conflict between the opposing directions of the I's activity (a conflict which is described in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*) is something which is distinguishable within the I itself. As surely as this conflict occurs within the I, it must be posited by the I within itself, and therefore it must first be distinguished. To say that the I posits this conflict means first of all: *the I opposes this conflict to itself.*[13]

Up until now, that is, at this point in reflection, nothing at all has been posited in the I. The I contains nothing so far except what pertains to it originally, namely, *pure* activity. At this point, therefore, to say that the I

[13] "Es setzt denselben sich entgegen." Note the connection between "opposing" (*entgegensetzen*) and "positing" (*setzen*), a relationship which is somewhat obscured in translation. To emphasize this relationship, one might translate *entgegensetzen* as "to posit in opposition," or "to posit over against," or, following *H/L,* "to counterposit." The reader should keep this connection in mind and should recall that when Fichte refers to something as "opposed," he means to indicate not simply a relationship or a manner of being, but, above all, a particular *action* (and the product of the same), namely, the act of positing something in opposition to something else.

opposes something to itself means that it posits something *not as pure activity*—and this is all that it can mean. Accordingly, the condition of the I when it is in a state of conflict would be posited as the opposite of its pure condition; it would be posited as a mixed activity, an activity which conflicts with and destroys itself. The action of the I which is thus indicated is purely antithetical.

Here we will leave entirely unexplored the question of how, in what manner, and by means of what faculty the I is able to posit anything at all. For this entire [portion of our] theory is concerned solely with the products of the I's activity. If, however (as was already mentioned in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*), this conflict should ever be posited within the I, and if anything further were to follow from it, then the mere *positing* of this conflict as such would mean that the oscillation[14]
I,336 of the imagination between two opposites would have to cease. Yet the traces of this former oscillation would have to remain as a *something*, a possible *material*. We can already see how this could occur, even though we do not yet see the faculty through which it would occur. What the I has to do is to posit this *conflict* of opposing directions or (which here amounts to the same thing) opposing forces. It must not posit either one of them alone, but must posit them both and must posit them *in conflict*, that is, in opposed but perfectly balanced activity. But perfectly balanced opposing activities cancel each other out and nothing remains. Yet something is supposed to remain and to be posited. What remains, therefore, is *passive* or *static material*,[15] something which *possesses force*, but which, on account of the conflict indicated, cannot express this force in activity, a *substrate* of force. (One can convince oneself of this at any time by making the experiment with oneself.) But the important point is that this substrate remains not as *something which was posited in advance*, but rather as the *mere product which results from the unification of opposed activities*. As will become clearer and clearer, this is the foundation of all material, as well as the foundation of all possible enduring substrata within the I (and nothing *is* outside of the I).

II

The I is supposed to posit this conflict *within itself*. It must, therefore, *equate*[16] itself to this conflict; it must relate the conflict to itself, and for this to be possible the conflict must contain within itself something which can serve as the basis for its relation to the I. But as we have just re-

[14] "Schweben."
[15] "ruhender Stoff."
[16] "gleich setzen." Literally, "posit as equal."

marked, the only thing that pertains to the I at this point is pure activity. Pure activity is as yet the only thing that can be related to or equated with the I. Consequently, pure activity must provide the basis that we are seeking for the relation [between the pure I and the conflict between the opposite directions of its activity]. Thus the pure activity of the I must be found within this conflict itself, or, to be more exact, this pure activity must be *posited* within the conflict, introduced into it synthetically.

The activity of the I when it is embroiled in conflict has just been posited as an activity which is *not pure.* But we now see that this activity must also be posited as *pure* activity, in order to make possible its relation
I,337 to the I. This activity is consequently *opposed to itself.* This is impossible and contradictory, unless some third thing is posited as well, in which this activity is at the same time equal to itself and opposed to itself. *Such a third thing must, therefore, be posited as the synthetic unifying link.*[17]

What such a third thing would be, however, is *an activity* (of the not-I) *which opposes all the activity of the I.* Such an activity would completely suppress and cancel out the activity of the I in conflict by counterbalancing it. Accordingly, if the required relationship [between the pure I and the I in conflict] is to be possible and if the contradiction which mitigated against such a possibility is to be resolved, then an *activity* of this sort, one completely opposed to the activity of the I, must be posited.

The contradiction in question is actually resolved in this way, and thus it becomes possible for the activity of the I which is engaged in conflict to oppose itself. This activity is pure and is to be posited as such (if we abstract from the opposing activity of the not-I, which pushes it back irresistably). This same activity is not pure, but rather objective (if it is posited in relation to the opposing activity). It is therefore either pure or not pure only under a certain condition, and this condition can be posited or not posited. As soon as it is posited that this is the sort of condition which can be either posited or not posited, it is also posited that the activity of the I can be opposed to itself.

The action here described is simultaneously *thetic, antithetic,* and *synthetic.* It is *thetic* insofar as it posits an absolutely unperceivable, opposing activity outside of the I. (We will later consider *how* the I could do this; all that we have shown here is *that* this occurs and must occur.) The same action is *antithetic* insofar as, by positing or not positing a certain condition, it opposes one and the same activity of the I to itself. It is *synthetic*
I,338 insofar as, by positing the opposing activity *as* a contingent condition, it posits this activity as one and the same.

[17]Such a "third thing" or "mediating unifying link" must be posited, because otherwise it would not be possible to preserve the unity of the I—which, according to the highest principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* must be preserved at all costs. See *Foundations, SW,* I: 107 (*H/L,* p. 107).

III

Only now does it become possible to establish the relation we were seeking between the conflict-torn activity and the I. Only now is it possible to posit this activity as something which pertains to the I. Now this activity can be appropriated.[18] It is posited in the I because and insofar as it can be thought of as pure activity as well, because it would be pure if it were not impinged upon by the activity of the not-I, and because it is objective (and thus not pure) only when it is conditioned by something totally alien, something which does not lie within the I at all, something totally opposed to the I. It is important to note (and must not be lost sight of) that this activity is related to the I not merely to the extent that it is posited as a pure activity, but also to the extent that it is posited as objective; it is thus related to the I *after* the synthesis and with everything which this synthesis unites in it. The purity which is posited in this activity is merely the *basis for the relation.* But this activity is also *that which is related.* For the activity is posited as pure, in the sense that it would be pure activity *if* it were not affected by the opposing activity.[19] But now it is posited as *objective* activity, *because* it really is affected by the opposing activity.*

In this relationship the activity that is opposed to the I is *excluded.* The activity of the I can now be regarded either as pure or as objective, for the same condition is posited in either case. In the first case, it is posited as something from which one must abstract; in the second, as something upon which one must reflect. (This condition is, to be sure, *posited* in either case. We are not concerned here with how and by means of what
I,339 faculty this is accomplished.) And as will become clearer and clearer, here lies the ultimate reason why the I goes beyond itself and posits something outside of itself. For here, for the first time, something disengages itself from the I (if I may thus express myself), something which, by means of further determination, will gradually transform itself into a universe with all of its characteristic features.

[18]"Und erst jetzt ist . . . die Zueignung möglich." Fichte uses the terms *Zueignung* ("appropriation") and *zueignen* ("to appropriate") to refer to the act by means of which the I "absorbs" the object and "makes it its own," which is to say, "posits it within itself."

[19]"Die in sie gesetzte Reinheit ist bloss der *Beziehungsgrund;* das *bezogene* ist sie, inwiefern sie gesetzt wird, als rein, *wenn* die entgegengesetzte Thätigkeit nicht auf sie wirken würde." The references of some of the pronouns in this sentence are unclear in the original.

*In opposition to Reinhold, Aenesidemus states that the entire representation (not merely its form) is related to the subject.[20] This is quite correct; that which is related [to the subject] is the entire representation. But it is also true that the basis for this relation is provided only by the form. It is precisely the same in our present case. We must not confuse the basis of the relation with that which is related. In order to be sure that this does not occur in the course of our deductions we must be on guard against it from the start.

[20]See Fichte's more detailed consideration of this point in the *Aenesidemus* review, translated above, Section I.

The relationship which has been derived here is called *sensation* (in other words, *finding-within-oneself*). (Only what is foreign is ever *found;*[21] what was originally posited in the I is always present.) What is *sensed* [i.e., what is *found within oneself*] is that activity of the I which has been canceled and destroyed. This is sensed (*found* in the I) and is something foreign insofar as it is suppressed. But it cannot originally be suppressed, nor can it be suppressed by the I itself. This is sensed (found *within* the I) insofar as it is suppressed only under the condition that an opposing activity is posited, and if this opposing activity were to be abolished, what is sensed [viz., the canceled activity of the I] would itself be pure activity. The subject of sensation, or *sensor,*[22] is of course the I that (in the action we have derived) is engaged in *relating.* Of course this I, to the extent that it *senses, is not itself sensed.* Thus we are not concerned with this I at this point. Whether, how, and through which particular mode of action this I is posited is something which will have to be examined in the next section. Nor are we here concerned with the opposing activity of the not-I, which is excluded in sensation. Like the relating I, this activity is not sensed, for it must be excluded if sensation is to be possible at all. We will see later how and through what particular mode of action this opposing activity is posited.[23]

We should not be disturbed because some things have to be left completely unexplained and undetermined at this point. This merely serves to confirm something which was said about the synthetic method in the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre,*[24] namely, that only the inter-

[21]"heist *Empfindung* gleichsam *Insichfindung.* Nur das fremdartige wird *gefunden.*" This entire paragraph is filled with (untranslatable) puns on the German term for "sensation," *Empfindung,* which has as its root the term *finden* ("to find" or "to discover").

[22]"das Empfindende."

[23]"*Feeling:* How does it become *sensation?* How does a sensed *object* arise from this, since it is really only something *subjective?*

"This question is answered above: This occurs in part because of the *necessity of external expression,* and it occurs in part because of the identity of a single action in different cases.

"Here we are within the realm of theory, and thus we are not really concerned with the former. But we are certainly concerned with the latter transition. Thus we are here really concerned with whatever it is that a property is transferred to or conferred upon.

"(1) Feeling. (2) Sensation as something objective. (3) Matter [*Stoff*] as something that possesses a certain set of properties. The latter is now also supposed to be *sensed.* (Our theory claims that it [i.e., the material object of sensation] is produced. Consciousness [claims that] it is sensed. This is in fact a confusion.) How and from where is this matter produced? How can it become sensed?

"This *matter* is neither my activity nor that of the thing. Instead, it is both. Only insofar as it is *mine* does it become an object of my consciousness.

"How then is this [object] mediately related—and necessarily so—to self-consciousness, that is, to *pure, objective* activity?

"(a) How is it even possible to explain the form of this objective activity, which nevertheless has to be posited as *our own?* Answer: by positing another [activity].

"III. This difficulty is overcome" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 361).

[24]Cf. *SW,* I: 115 (*H/L,* p. 113).

mediate links would be united by this method, leaving the extremes (in this case, the sensing I and the activity of the not-I in opposition to the I) ununited and in need of further syntheses.

I,340

§3. Second Theorem
The Sensor is Posited by Means of Intuition, Or, Deduction of Intuition.

In the preceding section sensation has been deduced as an action of the I, through which the I appropriates and relates to itself something foreign which it has found within itself. We became acquainted with both this action itself (*sensation*) and the object of this action (*that which is sensed*). However, the *sensor* (the I engaged in this action) and the activity of the not-I (which, in sensation, is excluded and is opposed to the I) remained unknown and, according to the rules of synthetic logic, had to remain unknown. With all that we now know about the synthetic method, we can expect that our next task will be to unite by synthetic means these excluded extremes—or, should this prove impossible, at least to introduce between them some intermediate link.

Our starting point here is the following proposition: according to what has already been said, sensation is in the I. Now since nothing pertains to the I except what the I posits within itself, the I must originally posit sensation within itself, that is, it must appropriate sensation. We have not yet deduced this positing of sensation. Though we have seen in the previous section how the I posits in itself that which is sensed and have seen that sensation is precisely this act of positing, we have not yet seen how the I posits the sensation itself within itself, or how the I posits itself as the sensor.[25]

I

In order to show this we must first be able to distinguish the activity of the I in sensing (i.e., the act of appropriating what is sensed by opposing it to the I) from what is thereby appropriated or sensed.

According to the previous section, what is sensed is an activity of the I,

[25]"Here the basis for positing something *outside of* ourselves becomes evident. This positing is an explanation.

"*Relation.* Sensation. Immediate consciousness of *my* activity as a limited activity. In this way, and in this way alone, what is objective (i.e., matter) is connected with me.

"(p. 13) *Sensation:* that is, the *act of sensing,* referred to itself, which is obviously an entirely different *operation.* This operation is now our object.

an activity which is considered to be in conflict with an opposing and
I,341 equal force which cancels and destroys it. What is sensed is regarded as a nonactivity which, nevertheless, could and would be an activity if it were not for the force which opposes it. Thus what is sensed is regarded as *static* activity, as the material or substrate of force.

Consequently, the activity which opposes this activity must be posited as an activity which is not suppressed or hindered by any opposing force. It must be posited as a real activity, a real action.

II

A real activity of this latter sort is now supposed to be posited in the I, but the hindered and suppressed activity which opposes this real activity must (in accordance with the previous section) also be posited in the I. This is self-contradictory unless the two activities (the real as well as the suppressed activity) can be related to each other by synthetic unification.[26] Accordingly, before we can begin to establish the desired relation between the activity in question and the I, we must first relate this activity to the activity which opposes it. For otherwise, though we would certainly have established a new fact in the I, we would have thereby displaced and lost the previously established fact. We would, therefore, have gained nothing and would not have advanced a single step.

Both the indicated real activity of the I and the suppressed activity must be related to each other. But according to the rules of synthesis this is possible only if the two are united, or (what amounts to the same thing) if some specific, third thing is posited between these two—a third thing which is activity (of the I) and passivity (suppressed activity) at the same time.

This third thing is supposed to be an activity of the I. It must therefore be posited by the I alone; it must be an act which has its basis in the I's mode of action. Thus it must be a positing; indeed, it must be a specific positing of something specific. The *real basis* of this third thing should be the I.

It follows from the above description that this third thing is also supposed to be a passive state of the I. It must be a specific and limited

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"It contains three elements: (1) something that is ascribed or related; (2) something to which it is ascribed, that is, the pure I; (3) something that engages in this act of ascription, as well as the act of the same, which we now take as our object" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 361–62).

[26] "II. (p. 14) *More clearly expressed:* I am what is suppressed and at the same time I am the *subject who intuits* this suppression—and it is as such that I become conscious of myself. This is an opposition. Where therein is the *root of self-consciousness?* What is the *X* upon which *both* of these depend?" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 362).

I,342 positing. However, the I cannot limit itself (as has been sufficiently shown in the *Foundations*). Accordingly, this limitation must come (albeit indirectly) from outside of the I, from the not-I. Thus the *ideal basis* of this third thing (the reason why it has any quantity at all) should be the not-I.

The third thing is supposed to be both of these things at once; the distinction we have just made should not correspond to separate elements within this third thing. This fact [viz., the "third thing" we are looking for] must be capable of being regarded as something absolutely posited by the I, even with respect to its *specific, determinate character;* it must also be capable of being regarded as posited by the not-I, even with respect to its *being.* Its ideal and real bases should be intimately united; they should be one and the same.

For the time being we wish to become completely familiar with this fact by considering it in terms of both of these aspects, each of which has to be possible in this case. It is an action of the I and must be capable of being regarded as something which, in all of its specific determinations, has its basis in the not-I. Thus the specific way in which the I acts should not determine the specific way in which the not-I acts; on the contrary, each should proceed alongside the other in complete independence, on its own basis and according to its own laws. And yet they must be in the closest harmony. Each should be exactly what the other is.

When one considers that the activity of the I is positing, and thus that the activity which is supposed to have its basis entirely in the I must be an act of positing, then one can see at once that the act in question must be one of *intuiting.*[27] The I contemplates a not-I, and this act of contemplating[28] is all that pertains to the I at this point. It posits itself, as such, in this act of contemplating, and it does so completely independently of the not-I. It engages in contemplation entirely on its own and without the slightest external compulsion. On its own and conscious of its activity, the I posits
I,343 one property after another in its consciousness. But it posits these properties as copies of something present outside of the I. These copied properties are supposed to be actually encountered in this external thing—and not merely because they were posited in consciousness. Instead, they are supposed to occur completely independently of the I and in accordance with their own laws, which are based in the thing itself. The not-I does not produce the intuition in the I; nor does the I produce the attribute of the not-I. They must be completely independent of each other, and yet in the closest harmony. If there were any way to observe the not-I in itself, except by means of intuition, and if there were any way to observe the intuiting subject in itself, in the mere act of intuiting and without any

[27]"ein Anschauen."
[28]"das Betrachten."

relation to the intuited not-I, they would be found to be determined in the same way. We will soon see that the human mind really does try to do this, though naturally only by means of intuition and in accordance with the laws of intuition. But it does so unconsciously, and this is the source of the harmony which was demanded.

It is certainly remarkable that those persons who believed themselves able to recognize things in themselves did not notice this simple point, which becomes obvious with the least reflection upon consciousness, and that it did not occur to them to inquire concerning the basis for this assumed harmony—a harmony which is obviously only presupposed, but neither is nor can be perceived. We have now deduced the basis of all knowing. We have shown why the I is and must be an intellect,[29] namely, because it has to resolve a contradiction *within itself,* a contradiction between its own activity and its own passivity. It must resolve this contradiction *from the start* (unconsciously—as a condition for the very possibility of any consciousness). It is clear that we could not have shown this had we not gone beyond all consciousness.

The following remarks are intended to clarify what has already been deduced, to shed some light on what is to come, and to facilitate a clear
I,344 understanding of our method. In our deductions we are always concerned only with the products of the indicated act of the human mind and not with this act itself. In each of the following deductions the act which produced this first product is itself in turn made into a product by means of a new act which is directed at the first act. In each deduction something is established, without any further determination, to be an act of the mind; then, in the subsequent deduction this same thing is posited and further determined. Thus, to take our present case, the intuition which we have just deduced synthetically must have already been present in the preceding deduction as an act. The action indicated in that preceding deduction was the following: the I posited its own strife-torn activity [i.e., the activity distinguished by a conflict of directions] as something active insofar as it imagined a certain condition to be absent, but posited it as suppressed and static insofar as this condition was imagined to be present. In both cases, however, this strife-torn activity was posited within the I. The intuition which we have just derived is obviously an act of this sort. In itself and qua action, intuition has its basis entirely in the I. This follows from the postulate (in the previous section) that the I must posit anything which is to be found within it. Intuition posits within the I something which is not supposed to be established by the I at all,

[29] "Intelligenz," that is, a finite knowing subject. Such an I (which is the limited I dealt with throughout the "theoretical" portion of the *Wissenschaftslehre*) is the epistemic subject. Such a "subject" is, as such, necessarily related to—and posits itself as determined by—a not-I (object known).

but is instead supposed to be established by the not-I; that is, it posits the impression which has occurred.[30] As an action, intuition is entirely independent of this impression, just as the impression is entirely independent of intuition. They run parallel to each other. Perhaps I can make this clearer by means of the following image: The original pure activity of the I is modified and at the same time shaped by the check which occurs. To the extent that this happens, it is not to be ascribed to the I. Now another free activity tears the first activity, just as it is, free from the encroaching not-I. Then it observes and examines the activity which it has thus torn away from the not-I, in order to see what it contains. But it cannot consider what it finds to be the pure form of the I; instead, it can only take it to be an image of the not-I.

III

After these preliminary investigations and hints, our actual task is clearer.

The I's action in sensation must be posited and determined. We may express the same thing in a more popular manner by asking: How does
I,345 the I manage to engage in sensation? What mode of acting makes sensing possible?

This question forces itself upon us because, according to what was said above, sensing would appear to be impossible. The I [in sensation] is supposed to posit something foreign within itself (i.e., a nonactivity, a passivity), and it is supposed to posit this *within itself* by means of activity. The I must thus be active and passive at the same time, and only on the assumption of such a unification is sensation possible. Accordingly, we have to indicate something in which activity and passivity are so closely united that a certain activity would be impossible without a certain passivity, and vice versa. We must find something in which passivity can be explained only by activity, and vice versa, and in which each is incomplete when considered by itself. They must be so closely united that activity necessarily leads to passivity and passivity necessarily leads to activity, for such is the nature of the synthesis which is required.

No activity in the I can be related to passivity in such a way that it *produces* passivity or posits it as produced by the I. For in such a case the I would posit something within itself and destroy it at the same time, which is self-contradictory. (The activity of the I cannot be directed at the substance of passivity.) However, the activity of the I can ascribe limits to passivity and thus determine it. Moreover, this is an activity which is not possible without passivity, since (as was just said) the I

[30]"den geschehenen Eindruck." This impression "occurs" in sensation.

cannot cancel out a part of its own activity—only something outside of the I can do that. Consequently, the I can posit no limits, unless what is to be limited is provided from without. The act of *determining*[31] is, therefore, an activity which is necessarily related to a passivity.

Similarly, if passivity consists merely in the *limitation of activity*, then it is necessarily related to activity. If there were no activity, then activity could not be limited, and there could be no passivity of the sort indi-
I,346 cated. (If there is no activity in the I, then no impression whatsoever is possible. Thus the type of effect produced is determined not only by the not-I, but by the I as well.)

Thus the "third thing" which we were seeking in order to make the synthesis possible is *limitation.*

Sensation is possible only to the extent that the I and the not-I mutually limit each other, and it is possible only upon the boundary between them. (This boundary is the actual point of union between the I and the not-I.) They have no other point in common, nor could they, since they are supposed to be completely opposed to each other. Beyond this common point their ways part. From here the I becomes an intellect only by freely crossing this boundary and thereby transferring something from itself to what is supposed to lie on the other side of this boundary. Considered from another point of view, the I becomes an intellect by absorbing into itself something which is supposed to pertain to what lies on the other side of this boundary. In both cases the results are the same.

IV

Limitation, therefore, is the third thing which resolves the contradiction and makes possible sensation as a union of activity and passivity.

To begin with, limitation permits the *sensor* to be related to the I, or (expressed in a more popular manner), the sensor is the I and can be posited as such insofar as it is limited in and by sensation.[32] Only insofar as it can be posited as something limited is the sensor the I and is the I engaged in sensing. Were the I not limited (by something opposed to it), then sensation could not be attributed to it at all.

As we have seen in the previous section, the I limits itself in sensation. It excludes something from itself as foreign to the I, and in doing this it
I,347 posits itself within certain boundaries, on the other side of which is

[31] "das Bestimmen." Viz., the activity of specifying or delimiting the activity of the not-I.

[32] "Now let us proceed to the main issue. (1) The sensor or sensing subject: what does it mean for this subject to ascribe activity to itself?

"The activity which it refers to itself is sensation. The intermediate elements have now been completely exhibited. Here we are only obtaining the construction materials. We will also *assemble them*" ("Kommentar," *AA* II,4: 363).

supposed to lie not the I, but something opposed to the I. The I *is* now limited (from the point of view of another intellect perhaps).

What is supposed to be posited now is the *sensation itself.* The first element of sensation which is to be posited is the excluding element which has just been indicated. (Sensation also involves relation, but that is not what we are presently concerned with.) The I is to be posited *as limited,* and it must not only be limited in the eyes of some possible intellect outside of itself, but *for itself* as well.

Insofar as the I *is* limited, it extends only *up to* the boundary. Insofar as it posits itself as limited, it necessarily goes beyond this boundary: it extends to the boundary itself, to the boundary *as such*—and, since a boundary is nothing apart from two opposing things, whatever extends to the boundary as such must also extend to what lies beyond the boundary in question.

The I as such is posited as limited. This means, first of all, that insofar as it lies within a boundary it is *opposed* to an I which is not limited by this particular boundary. Such an unlimited I must thus be *posited* in order to make possible the opposition just postulated.

The I is unlimited and absolutely unlimitable insofar as its activity depends only upon itself and is based solely upon itself, that is, insofar as it is *ideal* (to employ the expression that we have always used). An exclusively ideal activity of this sort is posited and is posited as going beyond the limitation. (Appropriately, our present synthesis meshes with the synthesis established in the previous section. There too the sensor had to posit the inhibited activity qua activity, that is, as something that would be activity in the absence of the not-I's resistance and if the I were dependent solely upon itself. Thus the sensor had to posit it as activity in an ideal sense. Here too this same inhibited activity is posited as an activity, but it is posited only indirectly. It is not posited by itself, but rather is posited along with that activity which precedes the check, and it must be posited in this way if our discussion is to advance and to cover new ground.)

I,348 This unlimited, ideal activity is opposed to the limited activity. Therefore, to the extent that it is limited, this limited activity is not ideal and is not dependent upon the I, but rather is dependent upon the not-I which opposes the I. We will call such an activity one which is directed upon *what is actual.*[33]

It is clear that the activity of the I (considered simply as an action in its own right and quite apart from whether it is inhibited or not) would thereby be opposed to itself, that is, would be viewed as directed either at what is ideal or at what is real. The activity of the I which goes beyond

[33]"eine auf das *Wirkliche* gehende Thätigkeit." Fichte does not appear to make any sort of technical distinction between *wirklich* ("actual") and *real* ("real").

that boundary which we will call *C* is a purely ideal activity and not at all real, whereas the real activity does not go beyond this boundary at all. The activity that lies within the bounds between *A* [the starting point of activity] and *C* is both ideal and real. It is ideal insofar as it is posited (by virtue of the previous positing) as having its basis solely within the I, and it is real insofar as it is posited as limited.

It is furthermore clear that this entire distinction originates from the opposition: if no real activity were posited, then no ideal activity would be posited as ideal, for there would be no way of distinguishing it. And if no ideal activity were posited, then no real activity could be posited either. Ideal activity and real activity mutually determine each other. Thus, here again (and, thanks to the application, the point is somewhat clearer) we have the proposition: ideality and reality are synthetically united. If nothing is ideal, then nothing is real, and vice versa.

It is now easy to show how what happens next must occur, that is, to show how the opposed terms are synthetically united and related to the I.

The activity which lies between *A* and *C* is what is supposed to be related or attributed to the I. This activity could not be related, qua limited activity, to the I, for the I does not limit itself. However, the activity in question is also ideal and, as such, has its basis solely within the I (by virtue of the previously indicated positing of ideal activity as such). This ideality (which, as will be shown at the proper time, is freedom or spontaneity) provides the basis for the relation [between this activity and the I]. The activity in question is limited only insofar as it depends upon
I,349 the not-I, which is excluded from it and regarded as something foreign. And yet, for reasons stated in the previous section, this activity is ascribed to the I, not merely insofar as it is ideal, but also, and explicitly, insofar as it is a real, limited activity.

To the extent that it is limited and excludes from itself something foreign (which is all that we have been concerned with so far, and not with the question of how this activity also absorbs this foreign thing into itself)—to this extent, the activity just related to the I is obviously the previously derived sensation. Thus we have partly accomplished what was required.

Since we are now sufficiently familiar with the rules governing the synthetic procedure, there will be no temptation to confuse that to which, in the action now deduced, a *relation* is made with *that which does the relating* [the relator].[34] We will now characterize the latter, to the extent that this is possible and necessary at this point.

The activity of the relator obviously goes beyond the boundary in question. It pays no heed at all to the not-I; instead, it excludes it.

[34]"Man wird . . . nicht in Versuchung gerathen, das in der deducirten Handlung *Bezogene* mit dem *Beziehenden* zu verwechseln."

Accordingly, this activity is merely ideal. But that to which this activity relates is also something merely ideal, namely, the same ideal activity of the I. Thus it is impossible to distinguish the relator from that to which it relates. Even if the I were to be immediately posited along with something related to it, the I would still not be present for reflection within this relationship. The I acts. We can see this from our present standpoint of scientific reflection, and any intellect, if it were to observe the I, would see this as well. But, from its present position, the I itself cannot see that it is acting (though at some future point it may well be able to see this). Thus the I forgets itself in the object of its activity. Here we have an activity which appears to be only passivity—which is what we were seeking. *Intuition* is the name of this action, a silent, unconscious contemplation, which loses itself in its object. *What is intuited* is the I insofar as it is engaged in sensation. Similarly, *that which intuits, the intuitor,* is also the I, which, however, neither reflects upon its own intuiting nor is able to do so, insofar as it is engaged in intuiting.

Here for the first time a substrate for the I enters consciousness. This
I,350 substrate is that pure activity which is posited as existing even in the absence of any foreign influence, but which is posited only in consequence of an opposition, and is thus posited through reciprocal determination. Its *being* is supposed to be independent of any foreign influence upon the I, but it cannot be posited without such a foreign influence.

V

Sensation must be posited: that is the task of this section. But sensation is possible only insfoar as the sensor attends to that which is sensed and posits it within the I. Thus that which is sensed must also be capable of being related to the I, and this relationship is mediated and made possible by the concept of limitation.

It is true that what is sensed has already been related to the I in sensation (see above), but here it is the sensation itself which is to be posited. Sensation has just been posited by means of an intuition, from which, however, what is sensed was excluded. This is obviously insufficient. Sensation must also be capable of being posited insfoar as it appropriates to itself what is sensed.

This appropriation of the relationship [between what is sensed and the I] is supposed to occur through the mediating concept of limitation. If limitation is not posited, then the required relationship is impossible; it is made possible only through limitation.

When something in sensation is excluded and posited as limiting sensation, then this something is itself limited by the I as something which

does not pertain to the I. Yet when we consider it from a higher point of view, we can see that this excluded something is, precisely as the object of the act of limiting, once more included *within the I.* Since the I limits it, it must be contained in the I.

We must now assume this higher point of view, in order to posit that act of limiting by which the I necessarily brings what is limited (i.e., what is sensed) into its own sphere of activity. And, in accordance with our task, we will thereby posit the sensor, though admittedly not, as we just did, directly in the I. Nevertheless, we will posit it qua sensor. We will
I,351 determine its mode of acting, characterize it, and distinguish it from all of the I's other activities.

By recalling what was said on this subject in the course of the deduction of sensation, we can gain at once a precise knowledge of this act of limiting, by means of which the I appropriates what is sensed. What was sensed was related to the I by positing an activity in opposition to the I. This activity was posited solely as a condition, that is, as something which could be posited or not posited. As always, that which does or does not do this positing is the I. Thus, for the sake of this relationship, not only was something attributed to the not-I, but something was also indirectly attributed to the I, namely, the ability to posit or not to posit something. It is important to note that what is supposed to be ascribed to the I is neither the ability to posit nor the ability not to posit, but rather, the ability *to-posit-or-not-to-posit.* Consequently, the positing of a particular something must occur in the I at the same time as the nonpositing of this something, and these acts of positing and nonpositing must be synthetically united. This must occur, and it certainly does occur in every case where something is posited as a contingent condition. And it occurs no matter how much persons whose knowledge of philosophy is limited to a scanty acquaintance with logic may complain about logical impossibility and incomprehensibility whenever they encounter this type of concept. A concept of this sort is produced by the imagination and must be grasped by the imagination—without which there would be no logic or any logical possibility at all.

The synthesis proceeds as follows: First, something is sensed. This is possible only if the not-I is posited as a merely contingent condition of what is sensed. (Here we are not yet concerned with *how* this positing occurs.) However, this act of positing is not possible unless the I is simultaneously engaged in positing and not positing. Thus an act of this sort necessarily occurs in sensing as a mediating link between the elements
I,352 indicated. What we have to show is how sensing occurs; therefore, we have to show how an act of positing and nonpositing can occur.

To begin with, the activity of positing and nonpositing is, in respect of its form, obviously an ideal activity. It oversteps the boundary [between I and not-I] and is thus not inhibited by it. The I must posit within itself

everything that is supposed to be in the I: this principle is the foundation of our deduction of this activity and, along with it, of sensation as a whole. This activity, therefore, has its basis solely within the I. But if it is only this and nothing more, then it is a mere nonpositing and not a positing—it is nothing but pure activity.

But the activity in question is supposed to be an act of positing as well. And of course it is an act of positing, because it by no means either cancels out or diminishes the not-I's activity as such. It leaves this activity as it is, merely positing it as something beyond the circumferance of the I. On the other hand, however, as surely as a not-I is a not-I, it never lies beyond the circumference of the I. Either it is opposed to the I,[35] or else it does not exist at all. Hence the activity with which we are here concerned does posit a not-I as such, but it is free to posit it wherever it wishes. The I is limited, since it has to posit a not-I. But it is also not limited, because, through its ideal activity, it can place this not-I as far beyond itself as it wishes. Suppose *C* to be the specific boundary point. The activity of the I which we are here examining posits *C* qua boundary point as such, but it does not leave this boundary at the point determined by the not-I. Instead, it moves it farther away, without any limit on how far it can move it. Hence this activity does posit a boundary as such (for the I), but it posits no boundary for itself, qua this specific activity of the I, since it places this boundary at no particular point. Among all the points possible, there is none beyond which this boundary could not be (and, indeed, would not have to be) extended. For this boundary is the product of an ideal activity which possesses within itself the basis for limitation, but the I has no basis for limiting itself. Thus, as long as this activity continues, it has no boundary. Were it ever to cease—and at the
I,353 proper time we will show under what conditions it does in fact cease—the same not-I, with the same undiminished and unrestricted activity, would still remain. Accordingly, the indicated action of the I is an *act of limiting* by means of ideal (free and unrestricted) activity.

We wanted a provisional characterization of this activity in order not to allow the indicated incomprehensibility to remain for long. However, in accordance with the rules of synthetic method, we should at once have determined this activity by means of opposition. We will now do this and will thereby make ourselves completely intelligible.

For the sake of the present synthesis, the act of positing and nonpositing must be opposed by something which is simultaneously *posited* and *not-posited,* and this act of opposing is supposed to determine them both. According to the above inquiry, the activity of the not-I was just such an act of positing and nonpositing. It is simultaneously posited and not-posited; that is, as the I extends the boundary it simultaneously extends

[35] "demselben entgegengesetzt." I.e., the not-I can be posited at all only by being posited in explicit opposition (*entgegengesetzt*) to the I.

its own real activity. The I posits the activity of the not-I, but it does so ideally, by means of its own activity. For if there were no such presupposed activity of the not-I, and if none were posited, then no boundary would be posited either. But in the very act of extending the boundary the I posits a boundary, and the boundary of the not-I changes as the boundary of the I changes. The boundary of anything that we can imagine is always posited by the I and the not-I together. But they posit this boundary in different ways, and in this they are opposed. In order to determine the nature of this opposition we must oppose this boundary to itself.

The boundary is either *ideal* or *real.* Insofar as it is ideal, it is posited by the I; insfoar as it is real, by the not-I.

But even while opposed to itself this boundary remains one and the same, and these opposing determinations are synthetically united in it. It is real only insofar as it is posited by the I—and thus only insofar as it is also ideal. It is ideal (i.e., can be extended by the I's activity) only insofar as it is posited by the not-I—and thus only insfoar as it is real.

I,354 In this way that activity of the I which goes beyond the fixed boundary *C* itself becomes simultaneously real and ideal. It is real insfoar as it is directed at a point posited by something real; it is ideal insofar as it does so on its own accord.

That which is sensed can thereby be related to the I. The activity of the not-I is and remains something excluded; for, as we can now see, as the boundary is extended into infinity, it is precisely the not-I which is pushed outward along with it. But a product of the not-I remains capable of being related to the I. The product in question is that limitation of the I which serves as the condition for the ideal activity which we have now described.

In this relation the product of the not-I is supposed to be related (as to the I) to the ideal act which is directed at the not-I. And this same ideal act should do the relating. Thus there is no difference between the relator (which, in accordance with the synthetic method, should not be posited at this point anyway) and that to which it is related (which, in accordance with the same method, must of course be posited here). Therefore, no relation to the I occurs at all, and the action thus deduced is an *intuition* in which the I loses itself in the object of its activity. *What is intuited* is an ideally grasped product of the not-I, which is indefinitely extended by means of intuition. Here for the first time we discover a substrate for the not-I. The *intuitor* is, as we have said, the I; but it does not reflect upon itself.

VI

Before we proceed to the most important part of our present inquiry, a few preparatory words and a summary of the whole are in order.

What was supposed to occur has by no means yet occurred. The sensor is posited through intuition; what is sensed is also posited thereby. But if, as was demanded, the *sensation* is to be posited, then the sensor and what is sensed must not be posited separately, but in synthetic unity
I,355 with each other. This could only result from extremes which have not yet been united. The extreme points in question were in fact present in the preceding inquiry, though we have not yet called explicit attention to them.

In order to posit the I as something limited and to appropriate this limit to the I, we first required an ideal, unlimited, and (so far as we could see) unlimitable activity opposed to this limited I. If the relationship demanded [between the sensor and what is sensed] is to be possible, this unlimited activity must already be present within the I as an unlimited activity which, through opposition, is supposed to determine another activity (viz., the limited activity). How and upon what occasion does the I arrive at an action of this sort? This question must still be answered. What is sensed is supposed to lie beyond the border specified. In order for it to be possible for what is sensed to be encompassed by and posited within the I, we assumed that there is an activity which, so far as we could see, extended the boundary without limit. What proves *that* such an act occurs is that otherwise the required relation would be impossible. But the question remains: Why should that relation, along with the act which makes it possible, occur at all? Suppose that it could subsequently be shown that these two acts were one and the same: then it would follow that in order to be able to limit itself the I would have to extend the limit, and in order to be able to extend the limit, it would have to limit itself. Thus it would follow that sensation and intuition would be intimately united and one would be impossible without the other, as would be inner intuition (the intuition of the sensor) and outer intuition (the intuition of what is sensed).

The strict form to which we have adhered until now has been indicated with sufficient clarity so that anyone can easily use it to test our reasoning. Let us now, however, for the sake of clarity in this important and decisive, though complex, investigation, take a more natural path.
I,356 Let us attempt to answer the pressing questions that have been raised. The results will determine what is to be undertaken next.

A.

From where does the ideal, unlimited activity which is opposed to the real, limited activity come? Or, if we are not yet able to answer this, can we not distinguish additional characteristics of this ideal activity?

The limited activity is supposed to be determined as such by its opposition to the unlimited activity, and thus is supposed to be related to it. But nothing can be opposed to something which is not posited. Therefore, the

possibility of the desired relationship *presupposes* not only the limited activity but also (and this is what we are actually concerned with here) the unlimited, ideal activity. This ideal activity is a condition for the relationship. The relationship, however (at least as considered from our present point of view), is not a condition for this activity. If the relationship is to be possible, the ideal activity must already be present in the I.

Leaving aside the question of its origin and the particular occasion that gives rise to this ideal activity, it is nevertheless clear that no boundary point *C* exists for this ideal activity. It is not directed at such a point, nor is its direction determined by such a point. It moves completely freely and independently into an unlimited realm.

Because it is opposed to the limited activity, this ideal activity has to be expressly posited as unlimited. This necessarily means that it must be posited as *not* limited *with respect to C;* for nothing is limited which does not have a specific boundary, and thus the limited activity must necessarily be posited as limited with respect to the specific boundary point *C*. (Whether the unlimited activity may perhaps be limited with respect to another point beyond *C* remains undetermined through this opposition and is supposed to remain so.)

The *specific* boundary point *C* is related to the unlimited activity in the relationship described above. Since the unlimited activity is supposed to be given prior to the relationship, *C* must really lie in the activity itself. In order for *C* to be capable of being related to this ideal activity, the activity
I,357 must necessarily come into contact with *C*. But (as it may here seem) it does so as if by accident; it is not originally directed toward *C*.

In the act of relating, point *C* is posited within the activity at the place where it occurs, and it is posited there without the slightest freedom. This point of incidence is determined; the activity of relating is merely the positing of this point *as* the point where *C* occurs. Moreover, in the act of relating, the ideal activity is posited as *going beyond this point* [*C*]. This again is impossible unless the point is posited as completely within the activity (insofar as the activity is to go beyond it) and is furthermore posited as something beyond which the activity goes. This point is accordingly carried along within the activity throughout its entire range. A boundary point is posited wherever the activity is reflected upon, but it is posited only experimentally and ideally, in order to measure its distance from the first fixed and immovable point. However, since this activity is supposed to be one which *goes* beyond, an activity which is supposed to go on and on and never to be limited, this second, ideal point can never be firmly established. Instead, it is continually hovering and floating away,[36] and doing so in such a way that within the entire range of this activity no point can be posited (ideally) with which this ideal point has

[36]"Er ist fortschwebend."

not come into contact. As certainly, therefore, as this ideal activity goes beyond the boundary point, that point itself must be extended into the infinite (until perhaps we arrive again at a new boundary).

But what activity extends this point? Is it the presupposed ideal activity, or is it the activity involved in relating? Prior to the relationship it is obviously not the ideal activity, for prior to the relationship the ideal activity knows no boundary point. However, the act of relating is itself something which already presupposes the extension [beyond the boundary], for this provides the basis for distinguishing and relating. Therefore, in and by means of the relationship, the boundary point and its extension are synthetically posited [i.e., are posited in synthetic unity with one another]. As we know, all relating has its basis solely in the I. Consequently, the boundary point and its extension are also posited by means of an ideal activity—though one other than the ideal activity just discussed.

To clarify what follows we will enumerate the actions of the I which we have found so far: (1) an action whose object is the ideal activity; (2) an action whose object is the real, limited activity (both must be present in
I,358 the I simultaneously; consequently they must be one and the same, although we cannot yet see how this is possible); (3) an action that transfers the boundary point from the real activity to the ideal activity and follows it there. This last action introduces a distinction within the ideal activity itself, namely, a distinction between the ideal activity up to point *C* (up to which point the ideal activity is completely pure) and the ideal activity which goes beyond *C*, and thus must extend the boundary. The importance of this will become evident later. We will not further characterize these actions here, since a complete characterization of them will not be possible until later.

To avoid confusion we will use letters to designate the above activities. The ideal activity which passes from *A* through *C* into the unlimited is opposed and related to the real activity which operates between *A* and the boundary point *C*.

B.

As we have just seen, the I cannot posit itself as limited without at the same time crossing the boundary and distancing the latter from itself. As it crosses this boundary, however, the I must at the same time posit itself as limited by the boundary. This is self-contradictory, as we have seen. Now it is true that we have said that the I is limited and unlimited in entirely opposite respects and with reference to entirely opposed modes of activity: it is limited insofar as its activity is real, and unlimited insofar as it is ideal. It is also true that we have opposed these two kinds of activity to one another. We have done so, however, only insofar as they

are limited and unlimited; hence our explanation is circular. The I posits the real activity as limited and the ideal activity as unlimited. Fine. And what activity does it posit as real? The limited one. And the unlimited activity it posits as ideal. If we cannot escape from this circle and find some basis for distinguishing between real and ideal activity, a basis which has nothing to do with limitation, then the required distinction
I,359 and relationship are impossible. We will discover such a basis; this is the goal of our present inquiry.

We wish to state provisionally the following proposition, whose truth will soon be confirmed: The I can in no way posit itself *for itself* without limiting itself and hence transcending itself.

Originally the I is posited by itself; that is, it is what it is for any intellect outside of itself. It is the foundation of its own being: this is the way in which we have to think of the I, *if* we are going to think of it at all. Moreover, for reasons which are expounded in the "Foundations of Practical Knowledge,"[37] we can attribute to the I a striving to *fill* infinity as well as a tendency to *comprehend* it, that is, to reflect upon itself as something infinite. Both tendencies pertain to the I just as surely as it is an I at all. But no action of the I springs from this mere tendency—nor can it.

Suppose that the I's striving carries it to point *C*, and that at *C* the striving to fill infinity is inhibited and interrupted. This is, of course, posited from the standpoint of a possible intellect outside of the I, an intellect which observes the I and has posited its striving in its own consciousness. What happens in the I when its striving is interrupted? The I was also striving to reflect upon itself, but it could not do so, because everything that is reflected upon must be limited, and the I was unlimited.

The I is limited with respect to *C*. Consequently, it is not only limited at *C* but also becomes able to reflect upon itself. It turns back upon itself; it discovers itself; it feels *itself*—but obviously nothing outside of itself as yet.

This reflection of the I upon itself is an act of the I (as we can see from our point of view at least, and as any intellect outside of the I would also be able to see). This act is based on the necessary tendency [to fill infinity] and on the additional condition [that this tendency be inhibited]. But what does reflecting mean to the I itself? In this reflection the I discovers itself for the first time; it first comes into being *for itself*. The I cannot
I,360 assume that anything else could have its basis in the I prior to the I's own existence. For the I, therefore, this self-awareness is a merely passive state. The I does not *reflect* for itself; rather it *is* reflected upon by

[37]Viz., Part III of *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*. See especially *SW*, I: 274–77 (*H/L*, pp. 241–44). Note that Fichte here misquotes the title of Part Three of the *Grundlage*, the actual title of which is "Foundations of the Science of the Practical."

something outside of itself. *We* see it act and act with necessity. It acts with necessity, partly because it can only act at all insofar as it acts according to the laws of its own being, and partly for the specific reason that activity is made possible only by a condition outside of itself. The *I itself* does not see itself act; it is entirely passive.

The I now *exists* for itself, and it exists because and insofar as it is limited. As surely as it is an I and is supposed to be limited, it must posit itself as limited; that is, it must posit in opposition to itself something which limits it. This necessarily occurs as a result of an activity which crosses boundary *C* and comprehends what is supposed to lie beyond as something opposed to the striving I. What kind of an activity is this—first for the observer, second for the I?

Both the form and the content of this activity have their bases solely within the I. The I *posits* something limiting because it *is* limited and because it must posit everything which is supposed to be within itself. The I posits it *as* something limiting, and therefore as something opposed and not-I, because it must explain a *limitation* in itself. Consequently, one should not for a moment believe that this opens the way for the I to penetrate the thing in itself (i.e., something with no relation to any I). We begin with the presupposition that the I is limited. Does this limitation possess a basis within itself (i.e., apart from any relation to some possible intellect)? What kind of basis is this? How could I possibly know? How can I find a reasonable answer when I am enjoined to abstract from all reason? For the I (i.e., for all reason) *there is a basis for this limitation,* because for the I all limitation presupposes something which is limiting. And for the I as well, the basis for limitation lies *not* within itself but rather in something opposed to it. Otherwise there would be contradictory principles within the I, and thus the I would not
I,361 exist at all. Such an opposed something is posited as such by the I in accordance with the laws of reason, and it is a product of the I.

(Our argument runs as follows: The I is limited and must necessarily be so if it is ever to be an I. In accordance with the laws of its own nature it must posit this limitation as well as posit its basis in something limiting; this something is, accordingly, its own product. Should anyone have so entangled himself in transcendent dogmatism that he cannot free himself from it, even after all that has been said, he would argue against us more or less as follows: "I concede that this whole way of reasoning is the way in which the I explains things. But what arises in the I in this way is merely the representation of the thing. This is of course a product of the I, but it is not the thing itself. I, however, am not concerned with the way the I explains things but rather with how things really are—in themselves. The I must be limited, you say. *This limitation considered in itself*—and entirely apart from the I's reflection upon it, which does not concern me here—*must have some basis.* This basis is precisely the thing in

itself." Our answer to the transcendent dogmatist is that his explanation is exactly the same as that of the I on which we are reflecting. As surely as his deduction conforms to the laws of reason, he himself is that I. He needs only to reflect upon this circumstance in order to see that he is still—though unknowingly—caught up in the same circle in which we knowingly find ourselves. If in his manner of explanation he cannot free himself from the laws of thinking which govern his own mind, then he will never escape from the circle we have drawn around him. But if he does free himself from the laws of thinking, his objections will again present no danger to us. This section will show clearly why he continues to insist on a thing in itself, even after he has conceded that we possess no more than a representation of it.)

What is the action in question for the I? It is not for the I what it is for an observer, because the bases upon which the observer judges the ac-
I,362 tion are not there for the I. For the observer the action occurred entirely within the I, both in terms of its form and of its content. It was in the I because, in consequence of its own nature, the I had to engage in reflection; the observer knows that the nature of the I is purely active, particularly when it is engaged in reflection. The I has not yet posited itself for itself as reflecting, nor even as active; rather, according to the above, it is purely passive. Consequently, it is not at all aware of its own acting, nor can it be so. Indeed, were it to appear to the I, the product of this activity would appear to the I to be something which is present without any help from the I.

(It is impossible to have, from the moment of its inception, an original consciousness of what has here been deduced—to catch ourselves, as it were, in the act. This is because in order to reflect upon its own specific manner of acting the mind must already have attained a much higher level of reflection. We can, however, perceive something similar [to such an original self-consciousness] when we intiate what we may call a new series within consciousness—when, for instance, we awaken from a deep sleep or a faint, particularly when we are in an unfamiliar place. At such times our consciousness always begins with the I. We first seek and find ourselves. Then, in order to orient ourselves, we turn our attention to the things around us. We ask ourselves: "Where am I? How did I get here? What was the last thing that happened to me?" We ask these questions in order to attach our present series of representations to others which have come to an end.)

C.

For the observer the I has now proceeded beyond the boundary point *C*, while still retaining the tendency to reflect upon itself. The I cannot reflect without being limited, but it cannot limit itself. Thus it is clear

that the required act of reflection will be impossible if, beyond *C*, the I is not once again limited at some possible point *D*. But since the demonstration and determination of this new boundary would lead us too far into matters which do not belong in this section, we must here content ourselves with the following postulate (which we are totally warranted in
I,363 making): If that which goes beyond *C* is an I, it must posit or reflect upon its act of going beyond. But in making this assertion we have no desire to absolve ourselves of the obligation of exhibiting (at the proper place) the condition under which such reflection is possible.

Merely by going beyond [*C*] the I produced (for the possible observer) a not-I and did so without any consciousness. The I now reflects on its product, and in this reflection it *posits* this product *as* not-I, and posits it as such absolutely and without any further specification. Again, this positing occurs unconsciously, because the I has not yet reflected upon itself. We will linger no longer over these acts of the I, because they are completely incomprehensible at this point. At the appropriate time we will arrive at them again, though by an opposite path.*

The I must reflect again upon this product of its second action. namely, upon any not-I which is posited qua not-I. It cannot reflect, however, without a new limitation, which will be exhibited at the proper time. Within feeling the I is posited as passive; therefore, the not-I which is opposed to it must be posited as active.

The not-I (which is posited as active) is in turn reflected upon; this must also occur under the previously indicated condition. Only now have we arrived at our new area of inquiry. As before, we will regard things from the point of view of a possible observer, because from the point of view of the I which is being investigated we can see nothing. This observer's point of view is very advantageous in inquiries of this sort, which go beyond the ordinary ways of thinking and which seem to the inexperienced thinker to be transcendent inquiries.

An active not-I is posited in and by the I (though, as we have several times noted, the I does so unconsciously). A new activity of the I is directed toward this active not-I, or, in other words, it becomes an object
I,364 of reflection. We can reflect only upon what is limited; therefore, the activity of the not-I is necessarily limited—and limited qua activity—because and insofar as it is posited *in action*. However, the range or circumference of its sphere of influence is not limited, as if, for instance, it could proceed only as far as *E* or *F* and no further (as one might prematurely assume). How could we determine this circumference, when there is as yet no space? The not-I does not remain *active;* instead, it comes to rest. The expression of its force is inhibited, and a mere

*Here we catch a passing glimpse of the points which we still have to investigate.

substrate of this force remains. For the moment we merely assert this in order to make ourselves understandable; later it will be deduced in detail. (From our point of view we can assume that the activity of the not-I is inhibited solely through the reflective activity of the I, that is, in and by this act of reflecting. At the proper time we will place the I itself in a position to allow it to make the same assumption. Here, however, the I is conscious of this activity neither directly nor indirectly—that is, through deduction—and thus cannot explain this inhibiting on the basis of [its own] activity. Instead, it will derive this inhibiting from the opposing force of another not-I which is opposed to the first—as we shall see at the proper time.)

When the I reflects it does not reflect upon this act of reflecting itself. It cannot simultaneously act upon an object and upon its own acting. Thus it is not conscious of the activity in question; instead, it forgets itself entirely and loses itself in the object of the activity. Thus here again we have that first and original outer intuition which we described above (though it has not yet been posited *as* outer). No consciousness arises as yet from this intuition—not only no self-consciousness (that is clear enough from the above), but not even a consciousness of the object.

In the course of our previous derivation of sensation, we discussed the conflict between the opposing activities of the I and the not-I. These
I,365 activities were mutually supposed to destroy each other. From our present point of view this now becomes perfectly clear. No activity of the I could be destroyed if the I had not already passed beyond what we can imagine to be its first and original range (viz., the area lying between *A* and *C* in our presentation) and entered the sphere of influence of the not-I (viz., the area from *C* to infinity). Furthermore, there would be no not-I and no activity of the not-I if the I had not posited them. Both are its products. The activity of the not-I is destroyed when we reflect *upon the fact* that this activity was something previously posited, which is now being canceled by means of reflection in order to make reflection possible. The activity of the I is destroyed when we reflect *upon the fact* that the I does not again reflect upon its reflecting (it is, of course, active insofar as it reflects). Instead, the I loses itself in reflection and transforms itself, as it were, into the not-I. This will be established more adequately later. In short, we have arrived at the starting point of the previous section and of the entire specifically theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* namely, at the conflict which must be present in the I for the possible observer. But this conflict has not yet been reflected upon [by the I], and hence, for the I, is not yet a conflict within the I. Consequently, no consciousness at all can be derived from the foregoing, although we now have available all the conditions which make consciousness possible.

VII

With respect to the possibility of reflecting upon itself, the I is now for itself what, at the beginning of our inquiry, it was for a possible external observer. This observer was confronted with an I, that is, with something perceptible[38] which was supposed to be thought of as an I. He was also confronted with something else, a not-I, as well as with a point of contact between the I and the not-I. By themselves, however, these two perceptions would not have supplied him with a representation of the limitation of the I unless he had reflected upon both. He was supposed to
I,366 reflect, because only insofar as he did so was he an observer. Subsequently, he witnessed all of the acts which necessarily proceeded from the nature of the I.

Through these acts the I itself has now arrived at the point occupied by the observer from the start. The I's sphere of activity (which is posited *for the observer*) contains the following things (which are also present as products of the I itself): a perceptible I (which can be perceived because it is limited), a not-I, and a point of contact between the two. The I may now reflect, and thus may make precisely the same discovery that only the observer could make until now.

Even at the beginning of all its activity the I originally reflected upon itself. It did so of necessity, as we have already seen. It possessed within itself a general tendency to reflect. As a result of the limitation, the condition for the possibility of reflecting was added as well; then the I reflected necessarily. A feeling was thereby produced, and from this feeling came everything else we have derived. The tendency to reflect continues into infinity; hence, it still remains within the I. Accordingly, the I can reflect upon its first reflections themselves, as well as upon everything which has resulted from them, because the condition which makes reflection possible is present, that is, because the I is limited by something that can be regarded as a not-I.

The I does not *have to* reflect (as we assumed in the case of the first reflection), because what conditions the reflection which is now possible is not necessarily a not-I, but may also be regarded as something contained within the I. The I is limited by the not-I which it has produced. One could object that, since it is supposed to be limited by its own product, the I could be said to limit itself. This has repeatedly been called the sharpest contradiction of all, and all our previous reasoning has been based on the necessity of avoiding this contradiction. In the first place, however, this not-I is not completely and absolutely the product of the I, because it was posited only under the condition that the I was limited by the not-I. In the second place, the I does not consider the not-

[38] "wahrnehmbares."

I to be its own product, and for precisely the same reason—insofar, that
I,367 is, as it posits itself as limited by the not-I. As soon as it recognizes the not-I as its own product, it posits itself as not limited by it.

If, however, that which we have posited in the I is really supposed to be present in the *I, then* the I has to reflect. Consequently, we postulate this reflection and have the right to do so. If, merely for the purpose of making ourselves understood, we may be permitted for a moment to entertain a transcendent thought, we might say the following: Perhaps we are affected by a multitude of influences, but if we do not reflect on this fact then we do not know it, and, in a transcendental sense, there would be no influences at all upon us *as* an I.

The required reflection occurs absolutely spontaneously, for the reasons given above. The I reflects simply because it reflects. Not only the tendency to reflect but also the act of reflection itself have their foundation in the I. It is true that this action is *conditioned* by something outside of the I (i.e., by the impression which it received), but it is not *necessitated* by this impression.

In considering this reflection we can direct our attention at two things, namely, at the I which is *reflected upon* therein and at the I which *reflects.* Hence our inquiry is divided into two parts, which will probably give rise to a third (as the synthetic method would lead us to expect).

A.

Up to now we have been able to attribute nothing to the I except feeling. The I is something which feels and nothing more. Consequently, when we say that the I which is reflected upon is limited, we mean that it feels itself to be limited, or that there is present in the I a feeling of limitation, of inability, of compulsion. It will now become clear how this is possible.

Insofar as the I posits itself as limited it goes beyond the boundary: this is a canonical principle.[39] Hence the I necessarily posits the not-I at the same time, though it does so without being conscious of its action. An intuition of the not-I is united with this feeling of compulsion, but this is a mere intuition, in which the I forgets itself in that which is intuited.

The intuited not-I and the I which is felt and which feels itself must be
I,368 synthetically united. This occurs by means of the boundary. The I feels itself limited and posits the intuited not-I as the source of its limitation. Or, expressed in easily understood terms: I see something, and at the same time I have a feeling of compulsion that I cannot immediately

[39]"ist Kanon." "I understand by a canon the sum total of the a priori principles of the correct employment of certain faculties of knowledge" (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* A796/B825).

explain. But it has to be explained. I therefore relate the two things to each other and say: "What I see is the reason for the compulsion I feel."

The following question could, however, still cause some difficulty: "How does it happen that I feel compelled at all?" Of course I explain this feeling to myself on the basis of the intuited not-I. But I cannot intuit anything if I am not already engaged in feeling. Consequently this feeling has to be explained independent of the intuition. How? It is precisely this difficulty which will force us to join the present synthesis (which is incomplete and impossible when taken by itself) to another. It will force us to turn the issue around and say: "I am as incapable of feeling a compulsion without intuiting [as I am of intuiting without feeling]. Thus intuition and feeling are synthetically united. Neither is the basis for the other; instead, they mutually establish each other." In order to facilitate this discussion in advance, let us leave matters just as they are and deal at once with the above question.

The I originally seeks to specify and to determine the attributes of things entirely on its own. It simply demands to exercise causality. This demand is resisted when it is directed at reality (and can thus be called real activity). As a result of this resistance another tendency which is originally based in the I is satisfied, namely, the tendency of the I to reflect upon itself. First there arises a reflection upon a particular reality, one that is given as specifically determined. This reality, insofar as it is already determined, can only be grasped by the ideal activity of the I, that is, the activity of representing and copying. Now suppose that both the activity which *is directed* at the attributes of a thing and the activity which *copies* these specific attributes without the I's participation are posited as I—and are posited as one and the same I (and this occurs absolutely spontaneously). In that case, the real I is posited as limited by the intuited attributes of the thing (i.e., by the very attributes which
I,369 would have opposed its activity if it had continued). The entire I which is synthetically unified in this manner feels itself limited or compelled. Feeling is the most primordial interaction of the I with itself, and even precedes the not-I, since of course a not-I must be posited to explain feeling. (We are speaking, naturally, of a not-I *in* and *for* the I.) The I strives toward infinity; it reflects upon itself and thereby limits itself. This was all derived above, and from this a possible observer might infer a feeling of the I. But the I has as yet no feeling of itself. Both the limited and the limiting I, synthetically united by absolute spontaneity, are posited—and posited as the same I. This is what we have derived here. As a result a feeling arises within the I—a feeling of itself; that is, its activity and passivity are internally united in a single state.

B.

We are also supposed to reflect upon the I which reflects on this action. This reflection also occurs necessarily and with absolute spon-

taneity. As we will show in what follows, however, this act of reflection is not merely something postulated; instead, it is brought about with synthetic necessity, as the condition which makes the previously postulated reflection possible. We are less concerned here with this reflection itself than with its object (insofar as it is its object).

The I which engaged in this act of reflection did so with absolute spontaneity, and its action had its basis solely within the I; that is, it was an ideal activity. We must therefore reflect on this activity qua ideal activity, and we must posit it as going beyond the boundary and proceeding into infinity—unless it is limited in the future by another reflection. But according to the laws of reflection, nothing can be reflected upon without being limited—even if it is limited merely and solely by the very act of reflection. And thus, just as surely as it is itself an object of reflection, this act of reflecting is something limited. Given the unlimitedness which must be preserved, it is immediately obvious what the limitation in question will be. The activity cannot be reflected upon qua activity. (As
I,370 we know independently of this, the I is never immediately conscious of its actions.) Instead, the activity is reflected upon qua substrate, that is, as the product of an absolute activity of the I.

It is evident at once that the I which posits this product forgets itself in the act of positing. Thus, the I intuits this product without being conscious of itself as intuiting.

Therefore, insofar as the I reflects again upon the absolute spontaneity of its own reflecting in the first act, an unlimited product of its own activity is posited as such. Later we will become better acquainted with this product.

This product is supposed to be posited as a product of the I. Therefore, it must necessarily be related to the I. It cannot be related to the intuiting I, for (according to what we said above) this has not yet been posited. At this point the I is posited only insofar as it feels itself limited: hence the product would have to be related to this aspect of the I.

But the I which feels itself limited is opposed to the I which freely produces something—and, indeed, something which is unlimited. The I which feels is not free; it is compelled. The productive I is not compelled; it produces freely.

This, of course, is how things must be if any relationship and synthetic unity are to be possible and necessary. Hence, we have only to exhibit the basis for a relation in the case of the required relationship.

The basis in question must be free or absolute activity. Such an activity does not pertain to the limited I. Thus it is difficult to see how the two could be united.

We need only advance one step further in order to obtain the most surprising result—a result which will put an end to age-old confusions and install reason in its rightful place forever. The I itself is supposed to be the relator. Therefore, it necessarily goes beyond the limitation, and

does so absolutely on its own, without any reason for doing so and, indeed, despite external reasons [which oppose its doing so]. In going
I,371 beyond this limitation, it appropriates the product and freely makes it its own. The basis for the relationship and the relator are thus one and the same.

The I itself never becomes conscious of this act, nor could it ever become conscious of it. The essence of this act is absolute spontaneity, and as soon as spontaneity is reflected upon, it ceases to be spontaneity. The I is free only when it acts. As soon as it reflects upon this action, the action ceases to be a free action; in fact, it ceases to be an action at all and becomes a product.

As we shall soon see in more detail, the entire distinction between ideality and reality, between representation and thing, arises from the impossibility of any consciousness of a free action.

Freedom or (what is the same thing) the immediate action of the I is, as such, the point where ideality and reality are united. The I *is* free inasmuch as and because it posits itself as free or sets itself free. It posits itself as free or sets itself free inasmuch as it is free. Specific determination and being are [here] one and the same. That which acts and that which is acted upon are [here] one and the same. The I acts in the very decision to act, and by acting it determines itself.

The I cannot posit itself as free by means of reflection. This is a contradiction. We would never arrive at the assumption that we are free merely by traveling along the path of reflection. But the I appropriates something as a product of its own free activity, and to that extent it posits itself, at least indirectly, as free.*

I,372 C.

According to the first synthesis, the I is limited insofar as it feels itself, and to this extent it posits itself as limited. According to the second synthesis, the I is free and posits itself (at least indirectly) as free, in that it posits something to be the product of its own free activity. These two specific determinations of the I (that is, its limitation in feeling and its freedom in producing) are completely opposed to each other. Now perhaps the I could posit itself as free or as determined in two quite differ-

*The "common sense" proofs for freedom are, therefore, quite correct and completely in accord with the workings of the human mind. Diogenes *moved* in order to prove that motion was possible (this possibility had been denied).[40] For the time being he proved this only to himself, for his demonstration did not, of course, put errant speculation back in its place. Still, should you seek to reason away someone's freedom, and should your likely sounding reasons really succeed in raising doubt concerning the matter, he can always demonstrate his freedom on the spot by actually producing something which he can only derive from his own free action.

[40]See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VI, 39.

ent respects, and perhaps it could do so in such a way that its identity would not be canceled thereby. However, in both syntheses the I is expressly required to posit itself as limited because and insofar as it posits itself as free. And it is equally required to posit itself in both syntheses as free because and insofar as it posits itself as limited. Hence, it has to be free and limited in one and the same respect. This is obviously self-contradictory, and this contradiction must be resolved. But first let us delve more deeply into the meaning of the propositions which have been proposed as opposites.

1. The I is supposed to posit itself as limited because and insofar as it posits itself as free. The I *is* free only insofar as it acts. Therefore, the first question we have to answer is What is *action?* On what basis do we differentiate between action and nonaction? All action presupposes some power or force. An action is absolute if the force is determined solely in and through itself, that is, if it receives its direction solely in and through itself. Previously the force had no direction. It was not posited in action, but rather as a static force, a mere striving to employ force. Accordingly, just as it is certain that the I is supposed to posit itself as totally active (for the time being the specific act in question is that of reflection), it is also certain that it must posit itself as nonactive. The determination to act presupposes stasis. In addition, this force gives itself a direction; that is, it provides itself with an object toward which it proceeds. The force itself provides its own object, but insofar as it does so, it must also already possess that with which it is supposed to provide itself. Therefore, it must already have been provided with its object, and it must have received it passively. Hence, self-determination to act necessarily presupposes a passive state. Here again we find ourselves involved
I,373 in new difficulties. But these difficulties will shed the clearest light on our whole inquiry.

2. The I is supposed to posit itself as free because and insofar as it posits itself as limited. That the I posits itself as limited means that it posits a limit or boundary for its activity. (This does not mean that it produces this limitation; rather, it only posits the limitation as something posited by an opposing force.) Accordingly, in order to be limited the I must already have acted; its force must already have obtained a direction, and indeed, a direction determined by the I itself. All limitation presupposes free action.

Let us now apply these basic principles to the present case.

For itself, the I is still something compelled, forced, and limited, insofar as it goes beyond the boundary and posits a not-I, which it then intuits, without being conscious of itself in this intuition. From the higher standpoint which we have adopted, we know that this not-I is the product of the I and that the I must reflect upon the not-I as its own product. This reflection occurs necessarily and with absolute spontaneity.

One and the same I cannot, with one and the same activity, simultaneously produce a not-I and reflect upon it as its product. Therefore, as surely as the required second activity is supposed to pertain to the I, the I must limit and interrupt its first activity. Moreover, this interruption of its first activity must likewise occur with absolute spontaneity, since the entire action occurs spontaneously. Furthermore, absolute spontaneity is possible only under this condition. The I is supposed to determine itself absolutely spontaneously, but nothing pertains to the I except activity. Consequently, it must limit one of its own actions, and (again because nothing pertains to it except activity) it must do so by means of another action which is opposed to the first.

I,374 In addition, the I is supposed to posit its product (the opposed and limiting not-I) *as* its product. The I posits the not-I as its product and raises it to a higher level of reflection precisely by means of that action whereby (as was just said) the I interrupts its act of producing. The lower, first level of reflection is thereby interrupted. All that we are now concerned with is the transition from the first level of reflection to the second, that is, with the point of union between the two. As we know, however, the I is never immediately conscious of its own acting; consequently, it can posit what is required as its product only indirectly by means of a new act of reflection.

By means of this new act of reflection, the not-I must be posited as a product of absolute freedom. The distinguishing feature of such a product is that it could also be something else and could be posited as such. The intuiting faculty oscillates between various specific determinations and posits only one from among all those which are possible. From this determinate act of positing, the product obtains the distinctive character of an *image.*[41]

(In order to make ourselves understood, let us take as an example an object with various properties—despite the fact that it is still too early to speak of such an object. In the first intuition—that is, in the productive intuition—I am lost in an object. First of all, I reflect upon myself; I discover myself, and I distinguish between myself and the object. However, everything in the object is still confused and intermingled; it is nothing more than an object. I now reflect upon its individual properties—upon its shape, for instance, its size, its color, etc.—and I posit them in my consciousness. As I consider each individual property of this sort I am at first doubtful and uncertain. I base my observations upon an

[41]"des Bildes." Note the connection between "image" (*Bild*) and "imagination" (*Einbildungskraft*) and *nachbilden,* which is the term translated above as "to copy." The verb *bilden,* a key term in the following discussion, and often translated elsewhere in this volume as "develop" or "cultivate," has in the following section the much more technical (and unusual) sense of "to form images." Also see text note 17 to Section IV and text note 4 to Section V, above.

arbitrary schema of shape, size, and color that approaches the shape, size, and color of my object. I look more closely, and only then do I determine more closely my original schema: let us say, for example, I determine that the shape is that of a cube, the size that of a fist, and the color dark green. By means of this transition from an unspecified product of free imagination to one which is completely specified and deter-
I,375 mined in one and the same act, what appears in my consciousness becomes an image and is posited as such. It becomes *my* product because I must posit it as absolutely determined by my own spontaneous activity.)

Insofar as the I posits this image as a product of its activity, it necessarily opposes it to something which is not a product of this activity, that is, to something which is no longer determinable but is instead completely determined by itself without any contribution from the I. This is the *actual thing* to which the creative I conforms in designing its image, and of which it must necessarily have a vague notion as it forms this image.[42] This thing is the product of the I's first action (an action which has now been interrupted), but it is impossible to posit it as such in this relationship.

The I copies the actual thing.[43] This thing must, therefore, be contained in the I and accessible to its activity; that is, there must be some demonstrable basis for relating the thing and the image of the thing (which are opposed to each other). A completely determined yet unconscious intuition of the thing provides the basis for the relationship in question. All the features of the object are completely determined in and for such an intuition. To that extent the intuition can be related to the thing, and the I remains passive within this intuition. Nevertheless, the intuition is also an action of the I and can therefore be related to the I insofar as it is actively engaged in forming images. As such, the I has access to the intuition; the image it forms is determined by the specific determinations it discovers in the intuition. (Or, if you prefer—though the meaning is the same—the I freely runs through the determinations present in the image, enumerating and taking note of them.)

(This mediating intuition is most important. Consequently, even though we will return to it later, let us immediately add a few remarks concerning it.

The mediating intuition has here been posited through a synthesis, and posited as a middle term which must necessarily be present if any image of an object is to be possible. But the question still remains: From where does this intuition come? Can this intuition not also be derived

[42]"Dies ist das *wirkliche Ding*, nach welchem das bildende Ich in Entwerfung seines Bildes sich richtet, und das ihm daher bei seinem Bilden nothwendig vorschweben muss." In referring to *das bildende Ich* Fichte is taking advantage of the double meaning of *bilden:* not only does it mean "the I which has images," but also "the productive or creative I."

[43]"Das Ich bildet nach demselben." I.e., the I "models its image" upon the real thing.

from somewhere else, since we are in the sphere of the actions of the
I,376 rational mind—a sphere in which all actions are interconnected like the links of a chain? Of course it can. Originally the I produces the object. It is interrupted in this process of production so that it can reflect upon the product. What happens to the interrupted action as a result of this interruption? Is it completely destroyed and eradicated? That cannot be. If the action were destroyed, the whole thread of consciousness would be broken off by this interruption, and no consciousness could ever be deduced. Moreover, we were expressly required to reflect upon the product of this action, and that too would be impossible if the action were completely canceled. It cannot possibly remain an action, however, because something at which an action is directed is, to that extent, not an action. But the product of this action, that is, the object, must remain. The interrupting action is, consequently, directed at the object. Precisely because this action is directed at the object and interrupts the first action, it makes the object *something*, that is, something established and fixed.

Another question: Does this interrupting action, which we know to be directed at the object, continue to exist as an action or not?

The I spontaneously interrupted its own act of producing in order to reflect upon the product, and thus it interrupted its producing in order to posit a new action in the place of the first and—with specific reference to the present stage of our inquiry—to posit this product *as its own*. The I cannot simultaneously act within two different relationships, and consequently, the action directed at the object is interrupted while its image is being formed. This act is present merely as a product; that is, it is an immediate intuition directed at the object after all, and it is posited as such. Hence it is precisely that intuition which we have just posited as a middle term which here reveals itself as such from another side.

This intuition is unconscious for exactly the same reason that it is present, namely, because the I cannot act in two ways at once, and hence cannot reflect on two objects simultaneously. In the present context the I
I,377 is regarded as positing its product *as* such, that is, as forming images. Thus, it cannot simultaneously posit itself as immediately intuiting the thing.

This intuition is the basis of all the harmony which we assume to exist between things and our representations of them.[44] As we have said, we produce an image spontaneously; it is easy to explain and to justify how we are able to view this image as our product and to posit it within ourselves. But this image is also supposed to correspond to something outside of us—to something which was neither produced nor deter-

[44]The translation here follows the suggestion of Alexis Philenenko, the French translator of the *Grundriss*, in reading *die* for Fichte's *den*. A literal translation of Fichte's text would be: "This intuition is the basis of all harmony—a basis which we assume [to exist] between things and our representations of them."

mined by the image, to something which exists independent of the image and in accordance with its own laws. It is not easy to see what right we have to make such a claim, or even to see how we could ever come to make this claim at all—unless we have at the same time an immediate intuition of the thing. If we convince ourselves that such an immediate intuition is necessary, we will not be able to resist for very long the conviction that the thing [which is directly intuited] must lie within ourselves, since we cannot act directly upon anything except ourselves.)

As we have just seen, the I is completely free when it is engaged in forming images. The image has the specific character that it does because the I determines the image in one way rather than another (which, of course, it could also have done). Because it is thus freely determined, the image can be related to the I and can be posited *within* the I as its product.

But this is not supposed to be an empty image. It is supposed to correspond to a thing outside of the I. It must, therefore, be related to this thing. We have just seen how the I gains access to the thing, thus making possible the relationship between the two, namely, by means of an immediate intuition of the thing, an intuition which must be presupposed. The image is completely determined insofar as it is related to the thing: it has to be precisely *this* image and not some other one, because the thing is completely determined, and the image is supposed to correspond to it. This complete determinacy provides the basis for relating the image to the thing. Not the slightest difference now remains between the image and the immediate intuition of the thing.

I,378

In saying this, we are obviously contradicting what was said before; for anything that must necessarily be what it is and which cannot be something else is not a product of the I, nor can it be posited in the I or related to it. (In any case, the I is not immediately conscious of its freedom in forming images, as we have several times remarked. We have, however, shown that insofar as the I posits the image, it posits it as its product—even though other specific determinations of the image may have been possible. This conclusion cannot be overturned by any subsequent operation of reason. If, however, the I immediately relates precisely this image to the thing, then it is no longer positing this image as its product. The I is no longer in the same situation as before, and there is no connection between its previous situation and its present one, except for that connection which might be imposed by a possible observer who thinks of the I that is acting in both situations as one and the same. What previously was only an image is now a thing. Now it must, of course, be easy for the I to place itself back on the previous level of reflection. But once more this will lead to no connection; what previously was only a thing will now be an image again. If, in this operation, the rational mind did not proceed according to a law—which it is our

present task to discover—then there would arise a lasting doubt about whether there are only things and no representations of them, or only representations and no corresponding things. Sometimes we would consider what is present in us to be a mere product of our imagination, and sometimes we would consider it to be a thing which affects us without any participation on our part. This wavering uncertainty really does arise if one forces someone unaccustomed to such inquiries to admit that the representation of a thing may only be found within himself. One moment he admits it, and the next moment he will say: "But it is, nevertheless, outside of me." And then perhaps the next moment he may
I,379 again think that it is inside him, until he is once again forced to place it outside. He cannot rescue himself from this difficulty, because, even if he has always followed the laws of reason in all his theoretical proceedings, he has no scientific acquaintance with these laws and cannot account for them.)

The gist of the law we are seeking is as follows: An image must not be possible without a thing, and a thing must not be possible (at least in the respect we are speaking of here, i.e., for the I) without an image. Thus, both the image and the thing would be synthetically united, and neither could be posited without positing the other.

The I is supposed to relate the image to the thing. We have to show that this relationship is impossible unless the image *as such* (i.e., as a free product of the I) is presupposed. If the required relationship is all that makes the thing possible, then by corroborating the last assertion, we will have succeeded in proving that the thing is not possible without the image. To reverse the argument: The I is supposed to produce the image freely. We have to show that this is impossible unless the thing is presupposed. We will then have demonstrated that no image is possible without a thing (a thing for the I, as goes without saying).

We will first discuss the relationship of the image (completely determined, of course) to the thing. They are related through the I. The I, however, is not immediately conscious of this act [of relating], and thus it is not easy to see how the image could be distinguished from the thing. Consequently, the I must be present within consciousness, at least indirectly. This would make it possible to distinguish the image from the thing.

That the I is indirectly present in consciousness means that the object of the I's activity (viz., the unconscious product of this activity) is posited as a freely produced product; that is, it is posited as capable of being something else, as contingent.

The thing is posited in this way insofar as the completely determined
I,380 image is related to it. There is present a completely determined image, that is, a property[45] (the color red, for example). In addition, a thing

[45] "Eigenschaft."

must also be present if the required relationship is to be possible. Both are to be synthetically united by an absolute action of the I. The thing is supposed to be determined by the property. The thing must not, therefore, be determined by the property prior to the [absolute] action or independent of it. The thing must be posited as something to which this property can either pertain or not pertain. For the I, a thing's set of properties or constitution[46] is posited as contingent only because an action is posited. And precisely because its constitution is contingent, the thing shows that it has been presupposed to be a product of the I—a product to which nothing pertains except being. The free action and the necessity for such an action to occur provide the sole basis for the transition from an indeterminate something to something specifically determined and vice versa.

(We will attempt to make this important point even clearer: In the judgment "*A* is red," *A* occurs first. *A* is posited, and insofar as *A* is supposed to be *A*, the proposition $A = A$ is valid in this case. Qua A, A is completely determined by itself—with respect for instance, to its form, its magnitude, its position in space, etc. (as one can see in the present case). Note that this is true, despite the fact that nothing at all pertains to the thing we talked about above (since it is still completely indeterminate), except the fact that it is a thing, that is, that it *is*. "Red" occurs next in the judgment. Red is also something completely determinate: that is, it is posited as excluding all other colors—as not yellow, not blue, etc. This is just what happened above. Thus, we have here an example of what we mean by the complete determination of the property or—as we have also called it—the image. Now what is the relation between *A* and the color red prior to this judgment? Obviously, this remains undetermined. Any colors, including red, could pertain to *A*. What is undetermined becomes determined only as a result of the judgment, that is, as a result of the synthetic action accomplished by the imagination of the
I,381 person judging. This action is expressed in the copula "is." When the predicate "red" (= "not-yellow," "not-blue," etc.) is applied to *A*, *A* is thereby denied all those possible colors (yellow, blue, etc.) which might have pertained to it. As surely as an act of judgment occurs at all, *A* has to be something undetermined. If *A* were already determined, then no judgment could be passed, no act would occur.)

The result of our inquiry is the following proposition: *If the reality of a thing (qua substance) is presupposed, all the properties of the thing are posited as contingent. Hence they are indirectly posited as products of the I.* Thus, in this case, it is the set of the thing's properties to which the I can be attached.

In order to gain a better overview, we will sketch here the systematic schema which must guide us in finding the final solution to our question. The validity of this schema was proven in the *Foundations of the Entire*

[46]"der Beschaffenheit des Dinges."

Wissenschaftslehre, in the course of discussing the concept of interaction.[47] The I posits itself as a totality, that is, it determines itself. This is possible only if it excludes something from itself, something which thereby limits the I. If *A* is the totality, then *B* is what is excluded. But as surely as *B* is excluded, it is also posited. It is supposed to be posited by the I, which can posit *A* as a totality only on this condition. Consequently, the I must also reflect on *B* as something posited. *A,* however, is now no longer a totality. When the other [= *B*] is posited, *A* itself is excluded from the totality (which is how we expressed it in the *Foundations*).[48] Consequently *A* + *B* is posited. *A* + *B* must in turn be reflected upon *as a unit.* Otherwise *A* and *B* would not be united. By means of this act of reflection *A* + *B* is itself limited; hence it is posited qua totality, and, in accordinace with the above rule, something must be opposed to it. Insofar as *A* + *B* is posited as a totality by means of the indicated act of reflection, it is equated with that *A* (in this case, the I) which is posited absolutely as a totality. That is to say, *A* + *B* is, in the sense with which we
I,382 are now familiar, posited and absorbed into the I. To this extent *B* is opposed to the totality, and, since *B* is here contained in *A* + *B, B* is opposed to itself, insofar as it is partly united with *A* (contained in the I) and partly opposed to *A* (posited in opposition to the I). According to the formula stated and proved above, *A* + *B* is determined by *B*. "*A* + *B* determined by *B*" must now be reflected upon as such, that is, insofar as *A* + *B* is determined by *B*. Since *B* is supposed to be determined by *B,* then that *A* which is synthetically united with *B* must also be determined by *B*. And since *B* and *B* are supposed to be synthetically united, the *A* which is united with the first *B* must also be synthetically united therewith. This contradicts our first proposition, according to which *A* and *B* are supposed to be absolutely opposed. This contradiction can only be resolved if *A* is opposed to itself, which would mean that *A* + *B* is determined by *A,* as was required in the discussion of the concept of interaction. *A* cannot be opposed to itself, however, if the required synthesis is to be possible. Hence, *A* must be simultaneously equal to itself and opposed to itself; that is, there must be some action of the absolute faculty of the I (the imagination) which unifies it absolutely. Such a schema guides the inquiry to which we now turn.

If A *is a totality and is posited as such, then* B *is excluded.* The I indirectly posits itself as I and limits itself to the extent that it forms an image absolutely freely, oscillating between several possible ways of freely determining the image in question. The image is not yet specifically determined, but it is becoming so. The I is caught up in the action of determining. Here we are referring to the situation which was completely

[47] "Wechselwirkung." See *SW,* I: 131–46 (*H/L,* pp. 127–39).
[48] *SW,* I: 192–93 (*H/L,* pp. 175–76).

described above. Let us call it *A* (= the inner intuition of the I which is engaged in a free act of image formation).

Insofar as the I acts in this way, it opposes the completely determined property to the freely oscillating image and indirectly opposes it to the I itself, which forms the image. We have already shown how the completely determined property is included in and comprehended by the I. This opposing of the property occurs by means of the immediate intui-
I,383 tion of the thing, in which, however, the I is not conscious of itself. That which is specifically determined is not posited as I; instead, it is opposed [i.e., posited in opposition] to the I and hence excluded from it. Let us call it *B*.

B *is posited, and consequently* A *is excluded from the totality.* The I posits the property as something determinate, that cannot posit itself (as it is supposed to do) as forming images freely unless it posits the property in this way. Thus, as surely as the I is supposed to posit itself as freely forming images, it must reflect upon the determinacy of the property. (We are not concerned here with the synthetic union of several characteristic features[49] in a single substrate. Nor, as will become immediately evident, are we concerned with the synthetic union of the features with the substrate. We are concerned instead with the complete determinacy of the representing I when it comprehends a feature. As an example of such a feature one might imagine the shape of a body in space.) By positing the determinate property, the I is excluded from the totality. That is, the I is no longer self-sufficient; it is no longer determined by itself, but instead by something completely opposed to itself. Its state (that is, the image it contains) can no longer be explained solely on the basis of the I; it can only be explained by something outside of the I. Consequently $A + B$, or *A* determined by *B*, is posited as the totality. (Externally determined pure intuition.)

(It is important to note with regard to these present distinctions in general, and particularly with regard to the ones we are making now, that nothing corresponding to each individual distinction occurs within consciousness. The actions of the human mind described here do not occur separately in the soul, nor do we claim that they do. Everything that we are now proposing occurs in synthetic union. We are continuing steadily along the synthetic path, inferring the presence of one link from the presence of the others. An example of the sort of intuition here deduced would be the intuition of any pure geometrical form, for example, the intuition of a cube. But such an intuition is not possible. One cannot imagine a cube without at the same time imagining the space in
I,384 which it is supposed to be suspended and then describing its limits. At the same time the proposition "the I cannot posit a limit without at the

[49]"Merkmale."

same time positing something limiting which is excluded by the limit" is here demonstrated within sensuous experience.)

A + B *must be reflected upon and must be reflected upon as a unit.* That is, the property must be reflected upon *as a determinate property.* Otherwise, the property would not be in the I, nor would the required consciousness of it be possible. We are thus driven beyond our present standpoint by something which is itself included within this standpoint (just as the I which is the object of our inquiry is similarly driven): this is precisely the essence of the synthesis. Here lies that *X* of which we have often spoken and which testifies to the incompleteness [of our inquiry]. Like every act of reflection, this one too occurs absolutely spontaneously. The I reflects simply because it is an I. For reasons we have often cited, the I is not conscious of the spontaneity of its action. Nevertheless, the object of this reflection (insofar as it is such) thereby becomes the product of that spontaneity and must display the characteristic feature of any product of the I's free action—namely, *contingency.* This product cannot be contingent insofar as it is posited as *determinate* and is reflected upon as such. It must, therefore, be contingent in some other respect, as will immediately become evident. In consequence of the contingency that pertains to it, the object becomes a product of and is absorbed into the I. In this way the I once again determines itself, and this is not possible unless it opposes something (viz., a not-I) to itself.

(Let me at this point make a general remark, for which the groundwork has already been laid, but which would not have been clear before now. The I reflects freely. This is an act of determining which, precisely thereby, is itself determinate. The I, however, cannot reflect or posit a limit without at the same time absolutely producing something else as a limiting agent. Thus *determining* and *producing* always go together. The identity of consciousness is based upon this.)

1,385 That which is opposed is *necessary* in relation to the specified property. In relation to what is opposed, this property is *contingent.* Moreover, that which is opposed is, like the property, opposed to the I. Thus, like the property, it is a not-I, but a *necessary* not-I.

According to the above discussion, however, the property, as something determinate and *insofar* as it is determinate (i.e., something to which the I relates merely passively), must be excluded from the I. And the I, when and insofar as it reflects on something determinate (as happens here), must exclude this determinate thing from itself. In the present reflection the I also excludes from itself another not-I, considered as something determinate and necessary. Therefore both must be related to each other and synthetically united. The basis for uniting them is that, in relation to the I, both not-I's are one and the same. The basis for distinguishing between them is that the property [i.e., one of the not-I's] is *contingent* and could be different, but the substrate [i.e., the other not-

I] as such is necessary in relation to the property. Both are united; that is, they are necessary and contingent in relation to each other. The property must have a substrate, but this property does not have to pertain to this substrate. Such a relationship of synthetic unity between what is contingent and what is necessary is termed a relationship of *substantiality.* (*B* is opposed to *B*. The latter *B* is not included in the I at all. *A* + *B* is determined by *B*. The image which is absorbed by the I and which, in itself, is completely determinate may always be something determinate for the I. To the thing, however, the property expressed in the image is contingent; this property also might not have pertained to this thing.)

The B *excluded in the previous operation must now be reflected upon.* We recognize this *B* as the necessary not-I, as opposed to the contingent not-I which is contained in the I. It immediately follows from this reflection that *A* + *B*, which was previously posited as a totality, can no longer be the totality, that is, it can no longer be the only thing contained in the I; to that extent, it is something contingent. *A* + *B* must be determined by
I,386 something necessary. *First of all* the property, the feature, the image (or whatever one calls it) must be determined by the necessary not-I. The property was posited as a contingent feature of the thing, which was itself posited as something necessary. Hence, the property and the thing are completely opposed to each other. As surely, however, as the I is supposed to reflect on them both, they must now be united in this I, which is one and the same. This is accomplished by the absolute spontaneity of the I. The union is solely a product of the I. This union is posited; that is, *a product is posited by the I.* The I is never immediately conscious of its own action; it is conscious of it only in and through its product. Consequently, the union of the property and the thing must itself be posited as contingent. Moreover, since everything contingent is posited as originating through action, this union must be posited as originating through action. That which is contingent and dependent upon another for its very existence cannot be posited as acting. Only that which is necessary can be so posited. The concept of acting is transferred in and through reflection to what is necessary. This concept actually lies only in the reflector,[50] and what is contingent is posited as its product, that is, posited as an expression of the free activity of the reflecting subject. Such a synthetic relationship is called a relationship of *efficacy;*[51]

[50] "in dem reflectirenden selbst," viz., in the I as the reflecting subject.

[51] "Wirksamkeit." Note the connection between this term and the term for "actual" which is employed at the end of this same sentence: *wirklich.* Both of these terms are derived from a root, *wirken,* which means "to work," "to operate," "to act (on)," "to cause," or "to influence." Similarly, the usual German term for "effect" is *Wirkung.* Throughout the discussion that follows, "category of efficacy" has been employed to render Fichte's term *Kategorie der Wirksamkeit,* which might also have been translated as "category of causality" (and indeed, Fichte's entire discussion of the "category of efficacy" is meant to

and the thing, viewed as containing within itself a synthetic union of what is necessary and what is contingent, is the *actual* thing.

(At this very important juncture we will add a few remarks:

1. The action of the I just indicated is obviously an action performed by the imagination in intuition. For, on the one hand, the I unites things which are completely opposed (which is the task of the imagination), while on the other hand, the I loses itself in this action and transfers to the object of its action something which lies within the I (which is characteristic of intuition).
2. Accordingly, the so-called category of efficacy [or causality] here reveals itself as originating solely in the imagination. And so it is: nothing can enter the understanding except through the imagination. We
I,387 can already foresee what alterations the understanding will make in this product of the imagination. We posited the thing as acting *freely,* that is, not in accordance with any rules, because imagination transfers its own *free* action to it. (Similarly, until the understanding comprehends and grasps its own mode of action, the thing is posited in consciousness as *fate,* with all its possible modifications.) What is lacking is any conformity to law. If the constrained understanding is directed at a thing, then that thing will behave in accordance with a rule.
3. For Kant, the categories were originally generated as *forms of thought,* and from his point of view he was quite right.[52] But in order to make possible the application of these categories to objects, Kant required the schemata produced by the imagination. For Kant, therefore, as well as for us, the categories are worked up by the imagination and are accessible to it. According to the *Wissenschaftslehre,* the categories arise *together with the objects,* and, in order to make the objects possible at all, they arise in the imagination.
4. Maimon and the *Wissenschaftslehre* say the same thing about the category of efficacy. But Maimon calls this procedure of the human mind a deception.[53] We have already seen elsewhere[54] that we cannot call something a deception if it conforms to the laws of rational beings and

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be a parallel derivation of what Kant called the category of *Kausalität*). Fichte himself occasionally employs the term *Kausalität* as well, but generally prefers *Wirksamkeit*—in part, no doubt, because of the way in which this term suggests a connection between "action" and "actuality."

[52]Viz., in the "Deduction of the Pure Concepts of Understanding," in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* A84/B116–A130/B169.

[53]See Salomon Maimon, *Streifereien im Gebiete der Philosophie,* vol. I (1793), p. 53. Maimon's direct influence upon the development of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is nowhere more evident than in the present work, which is obviously and deeply indebted to Maimon's highly original application of "the principle of determinability." For a discussion of Maimon's influence upon Fichte, see Atlas, *From Critical to Speculative Idealism,* pp. 316–24.

[54]See the remark on this subject (addressed to Maimon's position, though Maimon is not mentioned by name) in *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre, SW,* I: 227 (*H/L,* p. 202).

is, according to these laws, absolutely necessary and unavoidable—unless, that is, we want to cease to be rational beings. The real point of contention, however, is the following: Maimon would say, "I am prepared to concede that there are a priori laws of thinking as you have shown." (This is in fact a large concession, for how can there be present in the human mind a mere law without any application, an empty form without content?) "But even if I concede the existence of these laws," Maimon would continue, "only the imagination can apply them
I,388 to objects. Hence, in applying these laws to objects, the object and the law must be present in the imagination at the same time. How then does the imagination have access to the object?" This question can only be answered as follows: The imagination itself must produce the object (as is demonstrated in the *Wissenschaftslehre* on the basis of arguments which are quite independent of the present problem). Maimon errs in conceiving of the object as something other than a product of the imagination. It is true that this error is confirmed by a literal interpretation of Kant, but it is in complete contradiction to his *spirit.* To maintain that the object is not a product of the imagination is to become a transcendent dogmatist and to depart completely from the spirit of the Critical Philosophy.

5. Maimon merely doubted the applicability of the law of efficacy.[55] According to his principles he could have doubted the applicability of all a priori laws. This is what Hume did when he remarked: You yourselves are the ones who contain the concept of efficacy within you and transfer it to things; consequently, your knowledge has no objective validity.[56] Kant concedes him this premise, not only for the concept of efficacy, but for all a priori concepts. But Kant rejects Hume's conclusion by proving that an object can exist only for some possible subject. This dispute never touched upon the question of how, that is, by means of what faculty in the subject, that which is in the subject is transferred to the object. Maimon proves that only the imagination can apply the law of efficacy to objects, and thus concludes that our knowledge has no objective validity and that the application of the laws of our thinking to objects is therefore a mere deception. The *Wissenschaftslehre* concedes Maimon his premise—not only for the law of efficacy, but for all a priori laws. It shows, however, by means of a more detailed determination of the object (one which is already contained in the Kantian determination) that it is for precisely this reason that our knowledge possesses objective validity and that it could have

[55]For Maimon's doubts about the applicability of the principle of causality (or law of efficacy), see his *Versuch über die Transcendentalphilosophie* (1790), p. 187.

[56]It is unlikely that Fichte has any specific passage from Hume in mind at this point. Indeed, it is very likely that his acquaintance with Hume's work was based entirely upon his reading of Schulze/Aenesidemus, Maimon, Kant, Jacobi, and others.

such validity only under this condition. Thus skepticism and Criticism continue along their monotonous paths, each remaining forever true
I,389 to itself. Only in a very improper sense can it be said that the Critical philosopher refutes the skeptic; rather, he concedes everything the skeptic demands and usually even more. He merely limits the demands that the skeptic—like, for the most part, the dogmatist—makes concerning knowledge of the thing in itself, and he does this by showing that these demands are unfounded.)

As we have seen above, that which we now recognize to be an expression of the activity of the thing, and which is completely determined by this otherwise free activity, is posited in and determined for the I. Accordingly, the I itself is indirectly determined by the thing. It ceases to be an I and becomes itself a product of the thing, because what fills and stands for the I is a product of the thing. It is by means of these expressions of itself that the thing exercises an effect upon the I—which is, therefore, no longer an I at all (that which is self-posited); instead, in this specific determination, it is the I which is posited by the thing. ([Hence we can speak of] the effect of the thing on the I, or the "physical influence" of the Lockeans and those more recent eclectics who piece together an incoherent whole from the completely heterogenous parts of the Leibnizian and Lockean systems. From the present standpoint—but only from this standpoint—such talk is completely justified.) This is what we find when we reflect on $A + B$ determined by B.

This is impossible; therefore, $A + B$ determined by B must again be posited in the I or, in accordance with our formula, "determined by A."

First of all: A (i.e., the effect which the thing is supposed to produce in the I) is posited as contingent with respect to the I. Therefore, an I which necessarily exists in and through itself (the I in itself) is opposed to this effect in the I and to the I itself insofar as it is determined by this effect. What is necessary (the I in itself) is here opposed to what is contingent in the I, just as previously what is necessary (the thing in itself) was opposed to what is contingent in the not-I. And, just like the
I,390 thing in itself, this necessary I is a product of the I itself. What is necessary is substance; what is contingent is an accident thereof. Both what is contingent and what is necessary must be posited as synthetically united, that is, as one and the same I. Now what is contingent and what is necessary are absolutely opposed; consequently, they can be united only by an absolute activity of the I. As before, the I is not immediately conscious of this activity; instead, it transfers it to the object of reflection and so posits a relationship of efficacy between them both. The activity of the absolute I as it reflects produces what is contingent[57] (i.e., it

[57] "Das zufällige wird bewirktes." I.e., what is contingent is an effect (*Wirkung*) of the I's efficacy (*Wirksamkeit*), and is thus something actual (*wirklich*). Fichte's German text contains one pun after another on the terms *wirken, bewirktes, wirklich,* etc.

becomes an expression of the I), and to that extent what is contingent becomes something actual for the I. The fact that what is contingent is supposed to be an effect of the not-I is completely abstracted from in this act of reflection, for something cannot at the same time be an effect of the I and of its opposite, the not-I. The thing and its expression are thereby excluded from and completely opposed to the I. Both the I and the not-I exist in themselves necessarily and completely independent of each other. Each expresses itself independently through its own activity and force. Since we have not yet subsumed this activity and this force under any laws, they are still completely free.

We have now deduced how we come to oppose an active I to an active not-I and come to regard them as completely independent of each other. To this extent the not-I actually exists and is determined by itself. For the not-I the fact that it is represented by the I is something accidental. Similarly the I exists and acts through itself, and it is accidental to the I that it represents the not-I. The expression of the thing within the realm of appearance is a product of the thing, but this same appearance is a product of the I, inasmuch as it exists for and is comprehended by the I.

The I cannot act unless it has an object; therefore, the efficacy of the not-I is posited by that of the I. The not-I can act, but it cannot affect the I unless the I acts as well. When we posit an efficacy of the not-I *for the I*
I,391 we simultaneously posit the efficacy of the I. The expressions of both forces are therefore necessarily synthetically united, and the basis for their union (i.e., what we called above their "harmony") is something which must be demonstrated.

Like all unions which we have noted so far, this union occurs absolutely spontaneously. That which is freely posited is characterized by contingency; consequently, the present synthetic union must also be contingent. The activity was transferred above; consequently, it has already been posited and cannot be posited again. What remains, therefore, is the contingent unity of the action, that is, the accidental encounter of the efficacy of the I and the efficacy of the not-I *in some third thing which neither is nor can be anything more than that in which the I and the not-I meet.* We will call this third thing *a point.*

§4. *Intuition Is Determined in Time; What Is Intuited Is Determined in Space*

According to the previous section, intuition is supposed to be found within the I, as an accident of the same. Consequently, the I must posit itself as the intuiting subject or intuitor; it must determine the intuition with respect to itself. This proposition is postulated in the theoretical

part of the *Wissenschaftslehre* in accordance with the basic principle: nothing pertains to the I but what it posits within itself.

We will here proceed according to the same plan of inquiry as in the previous section, with the difference that there we were speaking of *something,* namely, an intuition, whereas here we are speaking only of a *relationship,* that is, of a synthetic union of opposing intuitions. Thus whereas in the preceding section we reflected upon a single element, here we will have to reflect upon two opposing elements in their interconnection with each other, and hence, what was there single will here be threefold.

I,392 I

Intuition, in the sense specified above (i.e., as the synthetic union of the efficacies of the I and the not-I by means of their contingent encounter at a single point) is posited in and absorbed into the I. In other words, *the intuition is posited as something contingent* (in the sense with which we are now sufficiently familiar). Note that nothing which has ever been established in intuition may be altered; instead, everything must be carefully retained. The intuition merely becomes *more fully* determined, while all of those specific determinations which have previously been posited remain.

Intuition X is posited as contingent, qua *intuition.* This means that another intuition is opposed [that is, posited in opposition] to this first intuition—not another object, another specific determination, or something of that sort, but rather (and this is very important!) another completely specified *intuition* = Y. In contrast to the first intuition, X, this second intuition, Y, is necessary; in contrast to Y, X is contingent. To this extent Y is completely excluded from the I which intuits X.

X, being an intuition, necessarily occupies a single point; so does Y qua intuition, but it occupies a point opposed to the first point and completely distinct from it. The two points do not coincide.

We must now ask what the necessity is that is attributed to the intuition Y in relation to X, and what the contingency is that is attributed to X in relation to Y. The answer is as follows: Intuition Y is necessarily synthetically united with its point if X is united with its point. The possibility of synthetically uniting X with its point presupposes the union of intuition Y with its point, but not vice versa. The I posits that another intuition could be posited at that point where X is posited. But if X is to be posited as an intuition of the I, absolutely nothing but Y can be posited at the point where Y is posited.

I,393 Only insofar as the contingent character of this synthesis is posited can X be posited as an intuition of the I. And only insofar as the necessity of a

similar synthesis [in *Y*] is opposed to its contingency can the contingency of this synthesis itself be posited.

(There remains, of course, a far more difficult question: What does and can determine point *X* except intuition *X*, or point *Y* except intuition *Y*? Up until now the point in question has been nothing more than the meeting point of the efficacies of the I and the not-I; it is this synthesis—and it alone—which makes intuition possible. This is how this point was presented in the previous section. It is now clear that if point *X* is to be posited as a point at which another intuition could be posited, and if, in contrast, point *Y* is to be posited as a point at which no other intuition could be posited, then both points must be separable from their respective intuitions, and it must be possible to distinguish these points from one another independently of these intuitions. Of course, we can not yet see *how* this is possible, but we can see *that* it must be possible if any intuition is ever to be attributed to the I.)

II

If *A* is posited as a totality, then *B* is excluded. If *A* is the image which is to be freely determined, then *B* is the property which is determined without the participation of the I. According to the previous section, a specific object *X* is excluded in the intuition *X* (insofar as *X* is supposed to be an intuition at all). Similarly, in the opposing intuition *Y* [a specific object *Y* is excluded]. Both objects are determined as such; that is, in intuiting these objects the mind is forced to posit them exactly *as* it posits them. This determinacy must remain; there is no question of changing it.

But whatever relationship exists between the intuitions must necessarily also exist between the objects. Consequently, object *X* must be
I,394 *contingent* in relation to object *Y*, and *Y* must be *necessary* in relation to *X*. The specific determination of *X* necessarily presupposes that of *Y*, but not vice versa.

Both objects, *simply insofar as they are objects of intuition,* are completely determined, and their required relationship to each other cannot be based on this determinacy; instead it must be based on some determinacy which is still completely unknown, namely, a specific determination through which something becomes, not an object of intuition in general, but an object of one [specific] intuition which can be distinguished from all other intuitions. The required determination is not an *inner* determination of the object (insofar as the proposition $A = A$ applies to it); instead, it is an outer one. Since it is impossible for an intuition to be posited in the I without the required distinction, and since the specific [outer] determination is the condition for the required distinction, it follows that the object is an object of intuition only on the condition that

it is so determined and, moreover, that such determinacy is the exclusive condition for all intuition. For now, we will call the unknown something which is supposed to determine the object *O;* we will call the way in which *Y* is determined by it *z;* and we will call the way *X* is determined by it *v.*

The mutual relationship between all of these terms is as follows: *X* must be posited as capable of being either synthetically united or not united with *v,* and hence *v* must be posited as capable of being synthetically united with *X* or with any other object. *Y,* on the other hand, must be posited as necessarily synthetically united with *z* if *X* is to be united with *v. Whereas v* is posited as something which either is or is not *to be united* with *X, Y* is necessarily posited as *united* with *z.* From this it immediately follows that any possible object can be united with *v*—any object, that is, except *Y,* because *Y* is already indissolubly united [with *z*]. Similarly, *X* can be united with any possible *O* except *z,* which is indissolubly united with *Y.* Hence *X* is absolutely excluded from *z.*

X and *Y* are completely excluded from the I, which completely forgets and loses itself in their intuition. Consequently, the relationship between *X* and *Y* (which is what we are discussing here) cannot be in any way
I,395 derived from the I; instead, it must be *attributed to the things themselves.* This relationship does not appear to the I to be dependent on its freedom, but rather to be determined by the things. The relationship in question was the following: since *z* is united with *Y, X* is absolutely excluded from *z.* As applied to the things, this relationship must be expressed as follows: *Y* excludes *X* from *z;* that is, it determines *X* negatively. If *Y* extends to point *d,* then *X* is excluded up to that point; if *Y* extends to *c, X* is excluded only that far, etc. However, the sole reason why *X* cannot be united with *z* is that it is excluded from *z* by *Y.* Obviously this exclusion remains in force only so long as the reason for it continues to pertain. Therefore *X* certainly begins where *Y* ceases to exclude it, or where *Y* comes to an end. Hence *X* and *Y* are continuous.

This exclusion and this continuity are possible only if *X* and *Y* belong to a common sphere (with which, of course, we are still completely unacquainted) and if they come into contact at a *single* point within this sphere. The positing of this sphere constitutes the synthetic union of *X* and *Y* in the requisite relationship. Consequently, such a common sphere is produced by the absolute spontaneity of the imagination.

III

If the *B* which was excluded is reflected upon, then *A* is thereby excluded from the totality (from the I). *B,* however, was absorbed into the I precisely through reflection, hence, it is itself posited as united with

A qua totality (as contingent). Therefore, another *B*, in respect to which the first *B* is contingent, must be excluded or opposed to it and considered to be something necessary. We will apply this general principle to the present case.

As we have shown, *Y* is now determined as synthetically united with an *O*, which is still completely unknown; *X* similarly is at least *negatively* determined in relation to and by means of *O*. *X* cannot be determined by *O* in the way that *Y* is; instead, it must be determined in an opposing way.
I,396 It is excluded from the specific determination of *Y*.

Insofar as *X* and *Y* are united with or absorbed into the I (as happens here), they must be posited as contingent *in this respect too.* This means, first of all, that a necessary *X* and *Y* (in relation to which the present *X* and the present *Y* are both contingent) are opposed to them, according to the procedure deduced in the previous section. This necessary *X* and this necessary *Y* are the substances to which the contingent *X* and *Y* pertain as accidents.

Without dwelling any longer on this facet of our inquiry, let us proceed at once to the synthetic union between what is now posited as contingent and what is posited as necessary in opposition to what is contingent. This synthetic union was also deduced above. In other words, the *Y* which was absorbed into the I (and was to that extent contingent) is an appearance: that is, a result, an expression of force *Y*, which force was necessarily presupposed. The same is true of *X;* indeed, both *Y* and *X* are expressions of *free* forces.

Whatever relationship exists between *Y* and *X* qua appearances must also exist between the forces which they express. Consequently, the expression of force *Y* is completely independent of the expression of force *X*. On the other hand, however, the expression of force *X* is dependent upon and conditioned by the expression of force *Y*.

I say *X* is *conditioned* by *Y;* that is, the expression of *Y* does not determine the expression of *X positively.* Nothing that we have deduced so far would lend the slightest support to the claim that the expression of [force] *Y* positively determines the expression of [force] *X*. The reason why the expression of *X* has precisely the character that it does and not some other specific character is not to be found in the expression of *Y*. However, the expression of *Y* does determine the expression of *X negatively;* that is, the reason why *X cannot* express itself in a certain specific way among all those that are possible is to be found in *Y*.

This appears to contradict what was said above. It is expressly posited that both *X* and *Y* are supposed to express themselves with free and absolutely unrestricted efficacy. But, according to the preceding inference, the expression of *X* is supposed to be conditioned by the expression of *Y*. For now we can only explain this negatively. *X*, no less than *Y*, acts [i.e., produces an effect] simply because it acts. Accordingly,

the efficacy of *Y* is not, as it were, the condition for the efficacy of *X* as
I,397 such, nor is it the condition of *Y*'s form. Our proposition should by no means be taken to mean that *Y* affects or influences *X*, that it forces and drives *X* to express itself. Moreover, in the manner in which it expresses itself, *X* is completely free, as is *Y*. Therefore, the latter cannot condition and determine the way in which *X* produces an effect, nor can it determine the material of the same. It is thus important to ask what possible relationship can remain [between *Y* and *X*] which would enable the efficacy of the one to condition the efficacy of the other.

Both *Y* and *X* are supposed to be synthetically related to a completely unknown *O*. For, as we have shown, both are necessarily related to each other in some way, as certainly as an intuition is supposed to be appropriated to the I. They are related to each other, however, only in respect to their relationship to *O*. Consequently, each must be independently related to *O*. (This is the same kind of inference which I could make if I did not know whether *A* and *B* were of a specific size, but knew that *A* was bigger than *B*. From this I could infer that, in any case, *A* and *B* must each have their own specific magnitude.)

O must be something which leaves the free efficacy of both *X* and *Y* unimpaired; for both are supposed to operate freely (as was expressly required) and are supposed to be united with *O* in, during, and without detriment to this free efficacy. Everything at which a force is directed (i.e., everything which is the object of a force, for this constitutes the only kind of synthetic union with which we are yet acquainted) necessarily restricts through its resistance the efficacy of the force in question. Therefore, *O* can have no force, activity, or intention at all. It can effect nothing. Hence, *O* has no reality at all; it is nothing. What *O* may still prove to be is something which we will perhaps see later. The relationship established above was as follows: *Y* and *z* are synthetically united, and, as a result, *X* is excluded from *z*. As we have just seen, this synthetic union of *Y* with *z* *occurred through the free, undisturbed efficacy of* *Y*'s own inner force. Nevertheless, *z* is in no way the product of this
I,398 efficacy itself; instead, *z* is only necessarily united with it, and it must therefore be possible to distinguish *z* from a product of *Y*'s efficacy. In addition, it is precisely through this union that the efficacy of *X* and its product is *excluded* from *z*. Accordingly, *z* is *Y*'s *sphere of efficacy*,[58] and according to the above, *z* is *nothing except this sphere*. In itself *z* is nothing; it has no reality, and nothing can be predicated of it except what has already been deduced. Moreover, *z* is the sphere of efficacy *merely* and *solely* for *Y*, because, by being posited as such, *X* and every [other] possible object is excluded from it. *Y*'s sphere of efficacy and *z* are one and the same; they are completely synonymous. *z* is nothing more than this

[58]"Sphäre der Wirksamkeit."

sphere, and this sphere is nothing other than z. z is nothing if Y has no effect, and Y has no effect if z does not exist. Y's efficacy *fills* z; that is, it excludes everything which is not a part of Y's efficacy. (We should not yet think of any [spatial] extension, for none has yet been demonstrated; nor should extension be introduced surreptitiously merely by employing the term.)

If z extends to points c, d, e, etc., then X's efficacy is excluded as far as c, d, e, etc. The sole reason, however, that X's efficacy cannot be united with z is that it is excluded from this by Y. From this it follows that there is a necessary continuity between the spheres of efficacy of X and Y and that they meet at a single point. Imagination unites them both and posits z and $-z$, or, as we specified above, $v = O$.

The efficacy of X is, however, supposed to be excluded from z without any detriment to X's freedom. But this exclusion does not occur without detriment to X's free efficacy if the filling of z by Y involves the negation or cancellation of anything in X—if, that is, it makes impossible some expression of X's force which would be possible by itself. Consequently, the filling of z by the efficacy of X must *by no means be a possible expression of* X. X must include no tendency whatsoever to fill z. X contains within itself the reason why z is not within its sphere of efficacy, or rather, there
I,399 is nothing in X which could be the basis for its having z within its sphere of efficacy. Otherwise X would be restricted and would not be free.

Thus Y and X meet contingently at a single point, a point where absolute opposites are joined in absolute synthetic unity (see above). This meeting occurs without any mutual influence or interference between Y and X.

IV

$A + B$ is supposed to be determined by B. Until now, only B has been determined by B; indirectly, however, A too is determined by B. A referred above to that which is in the I, and, since there is nothing in the I but intuition, this means that the I itself is determined by the not-I, and that what is in the I and constitutes it is itself indirectly a product of the not-I. Let us now apply this to the present case.

X is a product of the not-I, and with respect to its sphere of efficacy, it is determined in the I. The same is true of Y. Both are determined absolutely freely by themselves. In their contingent meeting, they both determine this meeting point as well, and the I is related merely passively to this encounter.

But this is not the way it should be, nor can it be so. As certainly as the I is an I, it must freely produce this specific determination. We previously offered the following general solution to this difficulty: once

posited as such, all reflection upon something qua substance (i.e., qua something enduring and efficacious) is, of course, necessarily and synthetically related to its product and is henceforth inseparable from it. All such reflection depends upon the absolute freedom of the I. The present difficulty is resolved in the same manner: Whether the I does or does not wish to reflect upon *Y* and *X* as upon something *enduring* and *simple* [i.e., as substance] is something which depends upon the absolute freedom of the I. Of course, if the I does reflect upon them, then, in accordance with this rule, it has to posit *Y* in and as filling the sphere of efficacy, *z;* and it has to posit *C* as the boundary point between the two spheres of efficacy [*z* and *v*]. The I, however, does not have to reflect upon *Y* and *X;* instead, it could freely posit anything else as substance in place of them.

I,400 To make this quite clear, one may imagine the spheres *z* and *v* as connected at point *C* (which is, in fact, how they have been posited). Instead of positing *Y* in sphere *z*, the I can posit *a* and *b* and can make *z* into the sphere of efficacy for both *a* and *b* by dividing it at point *g*. Suppose that what is now *a*'s sphere of efficacy is called *h*. But the I is still not compelled to posit *a* qua indivisable substance in *h;* instead, it could posit *e* and *d* and then divide *h* at point *e* into *f* and *k*, and so on ad infinitum. However, according to the rule deduced above, once the I has posited an *a* and a *b* it must designate for them spheres of efficacy which meet at a single point.

For reasons which have already been indicated more than once, the I, *by means of the imagination, must actually posit* this contingency of *Y*, as well as the contingency of *Y*'s sphere of efficacy for the I.

Consequently, *O* is posited as something *extended, connected,* and *infinitely divisable;* that is, *O* is *space.*

1. *The imagination separates space from the thing which actually occupies it* by positing (as it should) the possibility of completely different substances with completely different spheres of efficacy in space *z*. In doing this it projects an empty space. But it projects this empty space only experimentally and in passing, in order at once to fill it again with whatever substances and attendant spheres of efficacy it pleases. Consequently, there is no empty space at all except while the imagination is making the transition from filling the space with *A* to filling it with *b, c, d,* etc., as it chooses.

2. The very smallest part of space is still space, that is, something that possesses continuity; it is not a mere point or the border between specific places in space. It is space because something can be posited in it; moreover, insofar as space itself is posited, the imagination actually does posit something in it, namely, a force which necessarily expresses itself and which cannot be posited at all without being posited as expressing itself (in conformity with the synthesis of free efficacy which was dealt with in

the previous section). However, this force cannot express itself unless it
I,401 has a sphere for its expression—a sphere which is nothing but the sphere of its expression (in conformity with the synthesis dealt with in this section).

3. Consequently, intensity and extension are necessarily and synthetically united; one must not claim to deduce the one without the other. Every force necessarily fills a place in space. (Force does not fill space itself, because *it does not exist in space;* in itself, force is *nothing at all* unless it is expressed. Force fills space through its necessary product, which is the basis for uniting intensity and extension.) Moreover, space is nothing more than that which has been or will be filled by this product.

4. The internal features of things relate solely to feelings (of greater or lesser pleasure or displeasure) and are quite inaccessible to the theoretical faculty of the I. One feels, for example, that things are bitter or sweet, rough or smooth, heavy or light, red or white, etc. Apart from such internal features (which one must here ignore completely), things can be distinguished from each other only by the space which they occupy. Consequently, the space which a thing occupies pertains to that thing in such a way that it is attributable to the thing (and not at all to the I) but is nevertheless not part of the thing's inner nature.

5. Space, however, is everywhere the same. It is therefore impossible to distinguish and to determine anything on that basis, unless some thing = *Y* has already been posited in a certain space. The space in question is determined and characterized by *Y*, and it can now be said of *X* that it occupies a *different* space—different, obviously, from that of *Y*. All specific determinations of space presuppose a space that is filled and thereby determined. If you were to posit *A* in infinite empty space, it would remain as unspecified as it was before. You could not tell me *where A* is because you would have no specific point from which you could measure or orient yourself. The place which *A* occupies is determined by nothing
I,402 except *A*, and *A* is determined by nothing but the place in space it occupies. Consequently, there simply can be no determination present unless—and only insofar as—you posit one. This is an absolutely spontaneous synthesis. In sensuous terms: any intellect which had in view a point from which and a point toward which *A* was moving would be able to see *A* as continually moving through space; you, however, would not notice this movement, because for you there would be no such points, but only boundless, empty space. Thus for you, *A* would always remain in its place as certainly as it remains in space, for it occupies its place simply because you posit it there. Now posit *B* beside *A*. *B* is specified, and if I ask you where it is you will answer: "Beside *A*." And I will be satisfied, unless, of course, I go on to ask: "But where is *A*?" If you posit *C, D, E,* etc. beside *B,* then you have *relatively* determined the positions for all these objects. Fill up as much space as you will; this filled space will

still remain finite; in no way can it be related to infinite space. With space it will always be as it was with *A;* that is, it is specifically determined only because you have determined it by virtue of your absolute synthesis. This seems to me an obvious observation which should long since have made us realize the ideality of space.

6. The characteristic feature of the object of a *present* intuition is that we posit it through the imagination in a space—indeed, in an *empty* space. As we have shown, however, this is not possible unless we presuppose a space which has already been filled. [Thus we have] a succession of interdependent spatial fillings, and, for reasons which will be presented later, this succession can always be traced back ad infinitum.

V

The freedom of the I was supposed to be reestablished by positing the I as free to join *z* to *Y* or to *a, b, c,* etc., by means of which the not-I (the
I,403 determination of *Y* and *X* in space) was also supposed to be posited as contingent. *O* revealed itself as space only when this freedom was posited. We have thus ascertained the type of contingency involved, and this remains. The question is whether the difficulty has thereby been satisfactorily resolved.

It is true that the I is absolutely free to posit *Y, X,* or *a, b, c,* etc., in space. *If,* however, the I is supposed to reflect upon *X* qua substance (and that is the assumption we started with), then, in accordance with the rule presented above, *it must necessarily* posit *Y* as a specific substance determined by space *z.* Hence, the I is not free under this condition. Neither, moreover, is the I free to determine the place of *X;* in this respect too the I is determined, since it must posit *X* alongside *Y.* Consequently, given the assumption stated at the beginning of the paragraph [viz., that the I is reflecting on *X* qua substance], the I remains determined and compelled. It must, however, be free, and this continuing contradiction has to be resolved. It can be resolved only in the following way: *Y* and *X* must both be determined and opposed to each other in some other manner than through their determination and determinability in space, for above both were separated from their space and hence posited as things existing on their own and in themselves distinguished from each other. They must possess still other characteristic features by virtue of which the proposition $A = A$ applies to them; for example, *X* may be red, *Y* yellow, etc. Now the rule which determines place is not related in any way to these characteristics, and this rule does not imply that *Y* qua something yellow is what is determined in space and that *X* qua something red is what is spatially determinable by *Y.* Instead, this rule applies to *Y* qua something determined, and only in this respect does the rule apply to *Y.* Similarly, the rule which determines place

applies to *X* qua something determinable and in no other respect. This rule states that the object of the intuition which is to be posited must necessarily be something determinable and that it cannot be already determined. It also states that something determined must be opposed to what is determinable, and to that extent this determined something cannot be something determinable. This leaves entirely undecided the question whether *X* qua something otherwise determined by its inner
1,404 features—or *Y* qua something determined by its inner features—is determined or determinable in space. This gives freedom its latitude. It must oppose something determinable to something determined. But from among things which are in other respects opposed to each other it can choose to treat whichever ones it chooses as determined and whichever ones it chooses as determinable. Whether *X* is determined by *Y* or vice versa depends entirely upon this spontaneity.

(It makes no difference which spatial series one describes: whether one moves from *A* to *B* or vice versa, whether one posits *B* beside *A* or *A* beside *B*. For things in space exclude each other *mutually*.)

VI

The I can make whichever thing it wishes determined or determinable, and it posits this freedom of its own by means of the imagination in the manner just indicated. The I oscillates between determinacy and determinability; it assigns this pair of characteristics to the pair of things, or else it assigns neither to either (which amounts to the same thing). However, just as it is certain that an intuition and an object of an intuition are present, so it is also certain (according to the rule from which we started) that the I must make *one* of the two things, which, in themselves, are determined, into *something spatially determinable.*

No reason can be given why the I posits precisely *X* or *Y* or anything else as determinable. Nor should there be any reason for this, for this occurs absolutely spontaneously. This spontaneity displays itself as contingency. But one must note carefully wherein the contingency actually lies.

Something determinable is freely posited. Its determinability is, as such, necessary according to the rule, and qua object of intuition it must be something determinable. Consequently, the contingency of what is determinable consists in its *being posited* or *being there*.[59] The positing of

[59]"Gesetztseyn *oder* Dasein." As readers of Heidegger will remember, *Dasein* is an ordinary German word for "existence," which literally means "being-there" or "being-present." *Gesetztseyn* is, in contrast, a word of Fichte's coinage, modeled on *Dasein*. By using these two terms in apposition, Fichte implies that "existing" ("being there") is the same thing as "existing for a subject" ("being posited"), i.e., that nothing exists except what is posited to exist.

the determinable thing is an accident of the I. The I itself, by contrast, is posited as substance, in accordance with the rule introduced in the previous section.

I,405 VII

The I and the not-I are here completely opposed to and independent of each other, just as they were in the previous section at this point in our synthetic procedure. The internal forces within the not-I operate with absolute freedom; they fill their spheres of efficacy, meet contingently at a point, and (without detriment to the freedom of either) thereby exclude each other from their own spheres of efficacy—or (as we now know) from their own spaces. The I posits as substance whatever it chooses; it, so to speak, distributes space among substances in any way it wishes. With absolute freedom, the I determines by itself what it wishes to make determined in space and what determinable; that is, it freely chooses the direction in which it wishes to traverse space. In this way all connection between the I and not-I is canceled; they are connected by nothing more than empty space. This space, however, is completely empty and is supposed to be nothing more than the sphere in which the not-I freely posits its products *realiter*[60] and in which the I (with similar freedom) posits its products as invented[61] products of a not-I, that is, *idealiter*.[62] Consequently, the empty space in question limits neither the I nor the not-I, nor does it join them to each other. We have now explained the being in opposition[63] of the I and the not-I as well as their independent existence, but not the required harmony between them. Space is rightly called the form of outer intuition—that is, the subjective condition which makes such intuition possible. If there is no other form of intuition, then the required harmony between the representation and the thing—that is, any relationship between the two—is impossible, and consequently it is also impossible for the I to oppose them to each other. Let us continue along our path, along which we will undoubtedly encounter the form in question.

VIII

1. *Y* and *X* are both products of the free efficacy of the not-I, which is completely independent of the I, and this is true of them in all their

[60] I.e., posited as something actual, something that "really exists."
[61] "erdichtete."
[62] I.e., posited as something "ideal," something that exists only as a representation.
[63] "das Entgegengesetztseyn."

possible relationships and connections to each other, including their
I,406 relationship to each other in space. *For the I,* however, *Y* and *X* are not products of the not-I's efficacy; in fact they are nothing at all for the I, unless the I from its side exerts a free efficacy of its own.

2. The efficacy of both the I and the not-I must be reciprocal; that is, the expressions of both must meet at a point. This point represents the absolute synthesis of both by means of the imagination. The I *posits* this point of union by means of its absolute faculty, and it posits it as something *contingent.* That is, *the meeting of the efficacies of both opposites* is contingent, as was seen in the previous section.

3. Such a point must be posited if either *Y* or *X* is to be posited. To say that an object is posited means that an object is synthetically united with such a point and thereby united with an efficacy of the I.

4. With respect to the determinacy or lack of determinacy of *Y* or *X,* the I freely oscillates between opposing directions. This means that the spontaneity of the I alone determines whether *Y* or *X* is synthetically united *with the point* and *thereby with the I.*

5. The freedom of the I as thereby determined must be posited by the imagination. The *mere possibility* of a synthesis of the point with an efficacy of the not-I must be posited. This is possible only if the *point* in question can be posited apart from *the efficacy of the not-I.*

6. Such a point, however, is nothing but a synthesis of the efficacies of the I and the not-I. Therefore, it cannot be separated from all efficacy of the not-I without completely disappearing. Consequently, only the specifically determined *X* is separated from the point, and an undetermined product that could be *a, b, c,* etc. (i.e., a not-I as such) is synthetically
I,407 united with it. This is done so that the point can retain its specific character qua synthetic point. (It is clear for reasons already given that this is the way it must be. The encounter of *X* with the efficacy of the I, as well as with the point which must now be investigated, was supposed to be contingent and to be posited as such. This clearly means that *X* must be posited as capable of being united or not united with the efficacy of the I and with the point now under investigation—and the same would hold for any possible not-I in *X*'s place.)

7. According to everything that we have presupposed, the I should actually unite the point with *X* synthetically. For there is supposed to be an intuition of *X,* which, according to the previous section, is not even possible *as such* (i.e., qua mere intuition) without this synthesis. This synthesis occurs absolutely spontaneously and without any basis for determining it, as has already been proven. By uniting *X* with this point, however, everything else possible is excluded from the point; for the point in question is the point of union between the I and a force in the not-I—a force which is posited as independent, unitary, and freely operating substance. Hence, various possible forces are thereby excluded.

8. This act of composition is actually supposed to be a *positing* together[64] and is to be posited as such; that is, it is supposed to occur through the absolute spontaneity of the I. Furthermore, this positing is supposed to bear the stamp of such spontaneity (viz., *contingency*), but it is not supposed to bear it in any of the respects indicated above; instead, it has to bear it in itself, since the synthesis actually occurs and everything else is in fact excluded. Thus it has to be posited as accompanied by this particular stamp and characteristic feature [viz., contingency]. This is not possible, however, unless one posits this act of composition in opposition to another, necessary synthesis of a specifically determined *Y* with some point—but not with *X*'s point, because everything else is excluded from this point by the synthesis. *Y* must be united with *another, opposing* point. Let us call this point *c,* and the point with which *X* is united *d.*

I,408 9. Point *c,* like point *d,* is a point of synthetic union between the efficacies of the I and the not-I. However, *c* is opposed to *d* in the following way: In the case of *d,* the union is regarded as dependent upon freedom (i.e., it could be different); in the case of *c,* however, the union is regarded as necessary (i.e., it cannot be posited as capable of being otherwise). (The synthetic action is finished, completely over; it is no longer under my control.)

10. The contingency of the synthetic union with *d* must be posited; therefore, the necessity of the union with *c* must also be posited. Consequently both must be posited in this relationship as necessary and contingent with respect to one another. If the synthetic union with *d* is to be posited, then the union with *c* must be posited as having already occurred. The reverse, however, is not true; when the union with *c* is posited, that with *d* is not posited as having already occurred.

11. According to the postulate, the synthesis with *d* is supposed to occur. If this synthesis is posited as such, then it is necessarily posited as *dependent,* that is, as conditioned by the synthesis with *c.* The reverse, however, is not true; *c* is not conditioned by *d.*

12. In addition, the synthesis with *c* is supposed to be exactly what the synthesis with *d* was, namely, an arbitrary, contingent synthesis. If it is posited as such, another synthesis with *b* must again be posited in opposition to it as necessary, in which case *c* would be dependent upon and conditioned by *b,* but not vice versa. Moreover, like *c* and *d, b* is a contingent synthesis; insofar as it is posited as such, then another, necessary synthesis with *a* is posited in opposition to it. Thus *b* would be to *a* as *c* is to *b* and *d* is to *c,* and so on ad infinitum. In this way we obtain a series of

[64] "Dieses Zusammensetzen soll nun wirklich ein Zusammen*setzen* seyn." *Zusammensetzen* ("putting together," "combining," or "assembling") is another of those more or less ordinary German words containing the root *setzen* ("to posit") which Fichte utilizes for the special purposes of his own philosophy.

points considered as the points of synthetic union for the efficacies of the I and the not-I in intuition. Each of these points is dependent upon another specific point, which is not, conversely, dependent upon it. And
I,409 each point has another specific point which is dependent upon it, upon which it itself is not dependent. In short, we have a *temporal series.*

13. According to the argument above, the I posited itself as completely free to unite with this point whatever it wished: that is, the entire, infinite not-I. The point thereby determined is only contingent and not necessary. It is only dependent, and there is no other point which depends on it. It is called the *present* point.

14. Suppose we abstract from the synthetic union of a specific point with the object, and hence from the entire efficacy of the I (which is only united with the not-I through this point). If we make this abstraction, then it follows that things, regarded in themselves and independent of the I, are *simultaneously* in space (i.e., they can all be synthetically united with one and the same point). Things, however, can be perceived in time only sequentially, *one after another,* that is, in a successive series, each member of which is dependent upon another which is not dependent upon it.

In this connection we still have the following remarks to make:

a. There is no *past* for us at all, except insofar as it is thought of in the *present.* What was yesterday (one must express oneself in a transcendent manner in order to be able to express oneself at all) *is not.* It exists only insofar as I am currently thinking *that it* was yesterday. The question Has time really passed? is thus completely identical with the question Is there a thing in itself or not? Of course time has passed, if you posit it as having passed. And when you raise this question you posit a past time. If you do not posit a past time you do not raise this question, and consequently, for you no time has passed. This remark is very easily understood and should long since have lead to correct ideas concerning the ideality of time.

b. However, for us there must necessarily be a past. For only if there is a past can there be a present, and only if there is a present is con-
I,410 sciousness possible. In this connection we will repeat the proof of the last point, which was supposed to be presented in this section. Consciousness is possible only if the I posits a not-I in opposition to itself. Understandably, this is possible only if the I directs its ideal activity at the not-I. This activity is an activity of the I and not an activity of the not-I only insofar as it is a free activity—that is, only insofar as it could be directed at any other object instead of this one. The activity must be posited in this manner if consciousness is to be possible, and that is how the activity is posited. The characteristic feature of the present moment is that any other perception could have occurred within it. This is possible only if there is another moment in which no perception can be posited other

than the one which is posited: this is the characteristic feature of the past moment. Consciousness is therefore necessarily consciousness of freedom and of identity. It is consciousness of identity because every moment (as surely as it is a moment) must be joined to another moment. The perception *B* cannot be a perception unless one presupposes that the same subject has had another perception *A*. If *A* now disappears and if the I is supposed to proceed to perception *C*, then *B* must at least be posited as a condition for *C*, and so on ad infinitum. The identity of consciousness depends on this rule, and, strictly speaking, only two moments are required for this identity. There is no *first* moment of consciousness at all, only a *second* moment.

c. Of course the past moment, indeed, any possible past moment, can be raised again to consciousness—represented and brought to present consciousness,[65] posited as having occurred in *the same subject,*—so long as one reflects that a different perception *could have occurred* in the past moment in question. This moment is then posited in opposition to another moment which preceded it. And *if* a certain specific perception is to be posited in the former moment [i.e., in the originally past moment
I,411 which is now raised to present consciousness], then the perception which occurred in the moment previous to it was the only perception which could have occurred. This explains why we can always go back as far as we wish—unconditionally and endlessly.

d. A specific quantity of space always exists *simultaneously;* a quantity of time always exists *successively.* That is why we can only measure one by means of the other. We measure space in terms of the time required to traverse it, and we measure time in terms of the space which we or any regularly moving body (e.g., the sun, the hand of a clock, a pendulum) can traverse during that time.

Concluding Remark

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant begins his reflections at a point at which time, space, and a manifold of intuition are already given as present in and for the I. We have now deduced these a priori, and so they are now present in the I. Consequently, we have now established the distinctive character of the theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Thus for the moment we take leave of our reader—who will find himself precisely at the point where Kant begins.

[65]"repräsentirt oder vergegenwärtiget." *Vergegenwärtigen* is a common verb meaning "to bring to mind." It is here translated as "to bring to present consciousness" in order to bring out the connection with the words for "the present" (*Gegenwart*) and "the past" (*Vergangenheit*).

VIII

A Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre* [Excerpt]

Editor's Preface

Christian Erhard Schmid (1761–1812) was a professor of philosophy at Jena who became embroiled in a literary quarrel with Fichte just prior to the latter's arrival in 1794. The complicated public dispute between the two men continued intermittently until 1796, when Fichte published an article titled "Vergleichung des vom Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit der Wissenschaftslehre," in which he sought to bring the entire controversy to an end by declaring his opponent "*nonexistent as a philosopher* as far as I am concerned." Though the article became notorious because of the "act of annihilation" with which it concluded, its enduring value depends more on the account it contains of the aims and method of the *Wissenschaftslehre* than on its role in a long-forgotten polemical exchange.

The initial provocation in the Fichte/Schmid controversy came in a review Fichte published in the October 30, 1793, issue of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*.[1] The book reviewed by Fichte was Leonhard Creuzer's *Skeptical Reflections on Free Will*, to which Schmid had contributed a preface. In his review, which, like all reviews in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, appeared unsigned, Fichte not only criticized Creuzer for lack of fidelity to the spirit of Kant's philosophy, but also included some harsh comments on Schmid's "intelligible fatalism," which, according to Fichte, subverted all morality. Deeply offended by these remarks, Schmid published a "Declaration" in the February 15, 1794, issue of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. In this response Schmid not only defended his position and protested against what he saw as the distortions and falsifications contained in the review of Creuzer's book, but he went on

[1]Review of *Skeptische Betrachungen über die Freiheit des Willens*, by Leonhard Creuzer, in *SW*, VIII: 411–17 (*AA* I, 2: 7–14).

to say that the anonymous reviewer had shown himself insufficiently acquainted with the letter of Kant's writings to be qualified to pass any informed judgment on their spirit. Stunned by this public rebuke, Fichte replied in a "Counterdeclaration" of his own, which appeared in the same journal, March 16, 1794.[2] In this brief reply, Fichte identified himself as the author of the Creuzer review and indignantly rejected Schmid's accusations.

Fichte's letters from this period make clear just how irritated he was by Schmid's criticism, especially the portion impugning his mastery of Kantianism. This was the period during which Fichte was preparing to assume Reinhold's chair at Jena and was busy delivering his Zurich lectures and writing *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* Of course, he was anxious not to have any personal enemies among his new colleagues and expressed his regret at having already become embroiled in a public feud with Schmid, whom he claimed no intention of affronting.[3] As for Schmid's published denunciation of the Creuzer review, Fichte saw it as part of a plot by opponents to his appointment at Jena, to which he responded in an altogether characteristic fashion. "Before long," he wrote in a letter to Gottlieb Hufeland, March 8, 1794, "I hope to show Herr Schmid that I may have penetrated into the spirit of the Kantian philosophy rather more deeply than he has," to which he added that, had it not been for Schmid's attack, he probably would not have devoted so much care to the composition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.* Thus Fichte perceived Schmid not merely as a personal enemy,[4] but as a philosophical rival whom it was important to best.

Despite their unfortunate start, relations between Schmid and Fichte seem to have improved dramatically, albeit briefly, upon Fichte's arrival in Jena.[5] The public truce, however, was soon broken: this time by Schmid, in the preface to his *Grundriss des Naturrechts* (1795). Though Fichte is never mentioned by name, several sharp passages in this preface are clearly directed at him, and he is taken to task not only for the

[2]"Gegenerklärung über des Hn. Prof. Schmids Erklärung," in *AA* I, 2: 75–78.

[3]"I really would have preferred to be able to get off to a more judicious and opportune start instead of having this falling-out [with Schmid]. *I* have no wish to do him any public—still less any private—injury. Nevertheless, I would be willing to wager that in this affair he will be the loser, and that my behavior toward him will contrast sharply with his toward me" (Fichte to K. A. Böttinger, April 2, 1794). See the similar assurances of goodwill toward Schmid in Fichte's letter to Gottlieb Hufeland, March 8, 1794.

[4]"It thus appears that I may expect neither goodwill, justice, nor frankness from him [Schmid]. Remain my friend, but do not make an enemy of Schmid. I am afraid that it is not very likely that he will show any friendship toward me" (Fichte to Niethammer, April 1794).

[5]One of Fichte's first acts after arriving was to pay a personal call on Schmid. As Fichte explained in a letter to his wife (May 20, 1794), the purpose of this demonstration of goodwill was to win the public over to his side of the dispute. For a short while Schmid attended Fichte's public lectures, and it even appeared that the two men might have forgotten their ill-tempered public exchange (see Fichte's letter to his wife, May 26, 1794).

overactivity of his philosophical imagination, but also for the dangerous political and social consequences alleged to be the results of such innovation in philosophy.[6] Fichte had no difficulty recognizing himself as the butt of these critical remarks and lost no time issuing a public reply to Schmid—whose turn it then became to issue a "Counterdeclaration" of his own.[7]

In the meantime Schmid, who was known primarily as the author of several popular expositions of Kantianism,[8] began to set forth the outlines of his own philosophical system. He did this in an essay titled "Fragments from a Work concerning Philosophy and Its Principles" ("Bruckstücke aus einer Schrift über die Philosophie und ihrer Principien"), which appeared in the *Philosophisches Journal* in February of 1796. In presenting his own views in this article, not only did Schmid appropriate certain expressions and points from the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but he expressly employed Fichte's philosophy as the foil for his own—which he put forward as completing and correcting the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Schmid's system amounts to little more than a farrago of undigested bits of Kant, Reinhold, and Fichte and is of small intrinsic interest. Some familiarity with Schmid's views is, however, necessary for understanding portions of Fichte's argument in his "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre.*" Thus we must briefly survey the philosophy

[6]The following passage from the preface to Schmid's *Grundriss* (which is translated as quoted in *AA,* I, 3: 267n.) is indicative of the manner in which Schmid sniped at Fichte's views: "Of course certain fanatical world-reformers, whose creative imagination has led philosophy far beyond the laws of understanding, may take this occasion to pity him [viz., Schmid himself] for the limits which the law of reason sets to his mind, or to abhor and curse him for his cold heart and lack of enthusiasm for wild and illicit plans for liberating the people and making them happy."

[7]Fichte's new "Erklärung" was printed in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung,* November 14, 1795 (rpt. in *AA* I, 3: 213–14); Schmid's "Gegenerklärung" appeared in the same journal, December 12, 1795. Apparently Fichte sent Schmid a copy of his "Declaration" before forwarding it to the printer and offered to withhold it from publication in exchange for a personal apology from Schmid. (See Fichte to K. L. Woltmann, September 1795.) Fichte's "Declaration" includes the philosophically interesting claim that the assertion that a finite intellect has enough creative imagination to create the content of representations is a view already contained in the writings of Leibniz and Kant.

[8]Schmid arrived in Jena in 1785 and became the first Kantian to lecture there. In 1786 his first book, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft im Grundrisse zu Vorlesungen nebst einen Wörterbuch zum leichtern Gebrauch der Kantischen Schriften,* appeared and achieved some success as a popular presentation of Kant's theoretical philosophy. His next two books, *Versuch einer Moralphilosophie* (1790) and *Grundriss der Moralphilosophie* (1793), were devoted to popular presentations of Kant's practical philosophy. It was in discussing questions of applied morality that Schmid defended the idea, subsequently attacked by Fichte, of "intelligible fatalism," according to which the will is necessarily determined at the intelligible as well as the material level. Schmid's next book, *Empirische Psychologie* (1791), is one of the earliest examples of a psychologistic interpretation of Kant, anticipating in many respects the better-known psychological Kantianism of Friedrich Fries. Schmid's later attempt (in his *Bruckstücke*) to interpret the will, the understanding, the reason, and even consciousness itself as "facts of consciousness" is a strategy typical of "psychologistic" trivializations of transcendental philosophy.

offered in Schmid's "Fragments," and in doing so we will follow closely the summary of Schmid's views presented by Fichte himself in the first part of his "Comparison."[9]

The most distinctive feature of Schmid's system is its explicit reliance upon and constant reference to the "immediate facts of consciousness." According to Schmid, such facts are simply given; they are encountered by the philosopher within his own consciousness, and no philosophy can go beyond or behind these alleged "facts." Thus it is simply a matter of fact that we have separate and independently operating faculties of knowledge and of action, namely, the understanding and the will. These faculties are given within consciousness, which is not identical to them. The existence of consciousness is itself a fact—and thus a fact of consciousness. But consciousness is not identical to the self or I. Instead, the I is identified with reason, which is interpreted (along broadly Fichtean lines) as a striving to unify the manifold encountered within consciousness. The I's own unity is nothing more than an expression of the fact that it *can* be related to any and every thing, not that it actually is. Reason (the I), consciousness, will, and understanding: these "facts" can be derived neither from each other nor from any higher principle. Thus they constitute what Fichte calls Schmid's "four absolutes."

Of course the understanding and the will are also related to the world of nature, but this relation is itself simply an accidental fact of experience. It is not a necessary relation, and we therefore have no reason to claim any necessary connection between consciousness and the world (between the self-positing of the I and the positing of the not-I). The role of reason is not to produce unity so much as it is to demand—and discover—it. What reason determines is the general form of lawfulness, for a law is no more than a particular specification of the way in which some determinate multiplicity is unified. But reason itself cannot provide any particular content to fill this general form, and thus there is no necessary reason why reason's demand for unity should not go entirely unmet. That this does not happen is, again, just a matter of fact. As a matter of fact, reason's demand for unity is satisfied by the will and the understanding, and thus it happens that there are a priori categories of experience.

According to Schmid's account, knowledge is entirely passive and consists of no more than accidental encounters with the objects already present within consciousness. Furthermore, these objects, though they may conform to the law of reason, are in no sense determined thereby. They must be present in a fully determined form within consciousness *before* the law of reason can make its demands on them. Thus the objects

[9]The section in question is titled "Darstellung des Schmidschen Systems" (*SW*, II: 422–34) and is not included in the following translation of Fichte's essay.

of experience are self-determining. (Schmid nevertheless claims that the unity of consciousness would be interrupted unless the law of reason were applied to objects, but, as Fichte correctly notes, he has no way within his own system of justifying such a truly Kantian claim.) Hence, according to Schmid's scheme, we have, on the one hand, a world of ready-made objects and, on the other, reason, will, and understanding. These are all present within consciousness, but they are not related to one another—nor, it would appear, is any such interrelation really required for the possibility of experience. Yet these various "facts" can be related to one another. To do so is precisely the task of philosophy. The philosopher comes upon the scene in order to unify the manifold of objects in accordance with the laws of reason. What philosophy produces thereby is not experience itself, but instead various external systems of unity. Philosophy systematizes the available facts and thereby creates sciences, or systems of various facts. Philosophy and science are thus identical, though the "pure sciences" of logic and ethics constitute the special domain of the philosopher, for he alone applies reason to the faculties of the mind. Strictly speaking, ethics and logic are open only to philosophers. Not that other men are thereby deprived of anything important, for such pure sciences are of no use at all for the actual guidance of the will and understanding. Here Fichte sees a continuity between Schmid's new system and his earlier "intelligible fatalism": philosophy is the capacity for arguing and system building; it has nothing to do with self-determination, for which there is no place at all in Schmid's system.

In the end, Schmid's system fails to accomplish the most distinctive task undertaken by transcendental philosophy. It cannot demonstrate any necessary connection between reason's demand for unity and the multiplicity of "facts" (whether "a priori facts" like the faculties of the mind or "a posteriori facts" like the objects of experience). Schmid's system is powerless to do more than postulate the "objective validity of logic"; it cannot establish such validity by argument. In failing to see the connection between the "objective validity of logic" and the very possibility of any actual system of experience, Schmid has, according to Fichte, simply missed the point of Kant's entire revolution in philosophy.

In light of the ongoing public controversy between Schmid and Fichte it is hardly conceivable that Fichte would have let Schmid's "Fragments" pass unnoticed. He began preparing his reply almost at once, and it appeared in the *Philosophisches Journal* in the spring of 1796, that is, only a few months after the publication of Schmid's article. But if Fichte's public reply to his critic could have been predicted, the ferocity of his response caught even his admirers by surprise. Indeed, largely on the strength of the outrageous "act of annihilation" with which it concludes, Fichte's "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissen-*

schaftslehre" achieved quick and widespread notoriety. Though an admiring Schelling later placed it at "the summit of the polemical skill of the entire age,"[10] most of Fichte's readers, including many of his friends and supporters, were deeply shocked, above all by the *tone* of Fichte's essay.[11] Fichte's stated purpose in publishing this essay was to bring to an end, once and for all, his public quarrel with Schmid.[12] The "Comparison" sought to accomplish this by submitting Schmid's own system to painstaking examination, to discredit Schmid as a philosopher as well as to refute Schmid's claim that his system marked an advance on Fichte's. To demonstrate the absurdity of this claim, Fichte not only had to summarize Schmid's position, but also felt obliged to summarize his own system as well. Accordingly, the "Comparison" includes a lengthy discussion of the general character of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* in addition to detailed discussions of a few key points of difference between Schmid's system and Fichte's. From the standpoint of Fichte's expressed intention, the essay seems to have achieved its purpose. Schmid limited himself to a very brief public reply, in which he did little more than take notice of Fichte's "Comparison" and announce somewhat wryly that, Professor Fichte's "act of annihilation notwithstanding," Professor Schmid continued to exist.[13] But Fichte's "Comparison" proved to be his last, and by far most devastating, contribution to the protracted war of words he and Schmid had been conducting.

Fichte's account of Schmid's philosophy, his criticism of it, and even the once-controversial "act of annihilation" are no longer of any special interest to students of Fichte's thought. Nevertheless, of all Fichte's early writings, the "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre*" remains among the most interesting and valuable for con-

[10]Schelling's evaluation came in a letter to Fichte, May 24, 1801.

[11]Not untypical was Reinhold's reaction, as conveyed in his letter to Erhard of August 2, 1796 (quoted in *FvB,* pp. 71–72): "Reading Fichte's act of annihilation against Schmid . . . one can hardly trust one's eyes. An unbearable disgust prevents one from thinking about the hideous change which seems to be taking place in the Kantian philosophy, which more and more seems to be turning into a shameless display of practical egoism." For Fichte's reply to Reinhold's criticism of the tone of the "Comparison," see his letter to Reinhold of March 21, 1797 (translated below, Section X, no. 22).

[12]The same issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* in which the "Comparison" appeared also contained a "Concluding Remark" by Fichte, in which he tried to settle his personal accounts with Schmid as finally as he hoped to have settled their theoretical disputes in his "Comparison." In this "Concluding Remark," Fichte recounts the entire history of his dispute with Schmid and enumerates all of his grievances against the latter. It seems reasonable to assume that Fichte thought this documentation of what he perceived as Schmid's personal animosity might justify the aggressive tone in which the "Comparison" was written (*AA* I, 3: 267–71).

[13]Schmid's short notice appeared in the June 23, 1796, issue of the *Reichs-Anzeiger.* In this announcement he declared that he too was ready to discontinue the quarrel with Fichte, leaving final judgment in the matter to the public. According to a report by Karl von Savigny, Schmid lost all of his students at Jena in the wake of Fichte's "Comparison" (see *FvB,* p. 128).

temporary readers. The reason lies in the freedom and clarity with which he expresses himself in this essay on a number of difficult issues. The "Comparison" is not a part of Fichte's system. Like *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* the "Comparison" is *about* philosophy. To employ the distinction used by Fichte himself, it is not "metaphysics," it is "critique"; more specifically, it is part of the critique of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[14] Many philosophers have shown more interest in sketching grand projects and in laying foundations than in actually working out the details and consequences of their viewpoints. Fichte is a striking exception, for he devoted most of his energies to attempting to provide a fully articulated presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* with the result that even close students of his writings sometimes find themselves lost in a thicket of tediously detailed deductions. Thus those rare occasions when Fichte rises above his own project, as it were, and philosophizes about his philosophy are especially welcome and valuable. And nowhere did he describe his own standpoint with more freedom and clarity than in the "Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre,*" a brief essay which nevertheless illuminates several issues fundamental to an adequate understanding of Fichte's thought.

To begin with, there is the distinction between "science" and "philosophy"—a distinction Fichte accuses Schmid of obscuring. The distinction Fichte proposes has to do with the different attitudes the scientist and the philosopher adopt toward the commonsense assumption that our mental "representations" somehow indicate or refer to the "things" in the world. The sciences share this presupposition; philosophy cannot. Indeed, it is precisely the task of philosophy to examine this assumed correspondence between thought and reality and thus to try to confirm what the ordinary man and the scientist both simply presume. (Of course, Fichte elsewhere and often writes about his desire to make philosophy a genuine science. But "science" is here used in a special sense. For Fichte philosophy was never merely one science among others; instead, it is "the science of science," or *Wissenschaftslehre.*)[15]

Equally illuminating is Fichte's examination of Schmid's frequent resort to "immediate facts of consciousness" as the ultimate criterion of all truth. Fichte skillfully reduces Schmid's strategy to absurdity by exposing the many ambiguities contained within the notions of "immediate experience" and "facts of consciousness." The naïve project of utilizing alleged "facts" of "immediate experience" in order to solve philosophical problems concerning the connection between thought and reality is by

[14]See the preface to the second edition of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* above, Section III.

[15]Fichte's clearest discussion of "science" in the larger sense (the sense that can include philosophy) is contained in *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre.*

no means a mere historical curiosity. It seems to resurface with every generation, and Fichte's remarks on this topic are not without a certain relevance to more recent attempts to settle philosophical issues by appealing to the "bare facts."

Valuable too is the brief account this essay provides of the role of abstraction in all mental activity and of the intimate connection between (in Kant's language) concepts and intuitions. Fichte even includes a novel attempt to explain the inability of some persons to appreciate the basic insights of transcendental philosophy: such persons are unable to appreciate the indispensable conceptual component in all representation precisely because they are themselves victims of a particular set of concepts. Fichte calls this set of concepts, which is embedded in ordinary beliefs and ways of talking, the "primary system." One of the characteristic features of this "primary system" is the way in which it provides us with beliefs and concepts that seem to possess the self-evidence of facts. Students of the history of German idealism will be especially interested in the several important discussions this essay contains of Kant's philosophy and its relation to the *Wissenschaftslehre.* The interpretation of Kant's doctrine of the thing in itself, for example, greatly illuminates Fichte's own version of transcendental idealism at the same time that it helps us understand how he was able to persist in thinking of himself as a "Kantian."

Most valuable of all, however, are the many passages in the "Comparison" in which Fichte describes his general deductive strategy in the *Wissenschaftslehre,* paying special attention to the crucial problem of the starting point of philosophy. What he has to say on this topic in this essay is much clearer than what one finds, for example, at the beginning of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.*[16] The starting point of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the I, and Critical idealism, correctly understood, is no more than the adequate and complete analysis of the I. The entire *Wissenschaftslehre* is thus no more than an exhaustive analysis of the proposition with which it begins: "the I posits itself absolutely." By paying special attention to the manner in which this starting point is reached and the role therein of abstraction and intuition, Fichte is able to prevent some of the most common—and still prevalent—misconceptions of his enterprise. The I is not something which can be *given* at all. It is not a "fact"; it is an "Act." It is not some ghostly substrate of experience; it is the Act through which a subject-object (i.e., a self-conscious being) constitutes itself. The I is an agent, and its first act is to constitute itself as an

[16]By beginning with the I and with the proposition that "the I posits itself absolutely," the "Comparison" more closely resembles the unfinished *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* than it does the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre.* Another similarity between the "Comparison" and the *New Presentation* is stylistic: both contain some of the clearest and most attractive philosophical prose Fichte ever wrote.

agent. Fichte's long discussion of the I in this article not only clarifies his use of the important but problematic term *posit*, it also explains his fierce opposition to systems, like Schmid's "intelligible fatalism," in which the concept of self-determination has no place. For self-determination—freedom—is the defining feature of the I.

The text of "Vergleichung des vom Herrn Prof. Schmid aufgestellten Systems mit dem Wissenschaftslehre" upon which the translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW*, II: 421–58 (*AA* I, 3: 235–66). The excerpt translated here consists of slightly more than two-thirds of the entire article. The first section, "Darstellung des Schmidischen Systems," is omitted from the translation but is summarized above.

II,421

A Comparison between Prof. Schmid's System and the *Wissenschaftslehre* [Excerpt]

The reasons which have compelled me to undertake this comparison will be clear to the reader after he has finished this article.

I am going to present Schmid's system only in the context of its relation to *the principles* of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* omitting from discussion everything else. I have worked conscientiously and hard to acquire an accurate view of Schmid's system—which has not been an easy task. In saying this, I have no desire to cast any doubt upon Professor Schmid's clarity. It was entirely my own fault that I had so much difficulty in understanding him. I found it impossible to believe that the meaning which offered itself to me when I first glanced at his system was the true one; I thought that there must be something else behind it. I searched and searched, until I was completely convinced that I understood Professor Schmid quite correctly. I wish that my readers would carefully read Schmid's article[1] a few times before they turn to mine and would
II,422 compare his article to my exposition of the system presented therein. Without any further preliminaries, I will turn to the matter at issue.

Presentation of Schmid's System [omitted][2]

II,434

Relation of This System to What Has Until Now Been Considered to Be Philosophy

With his first step toward self-reflection, man distinguishes between representa-

[1]Christian Erhard Schmid, "Bruckstücke aus einer Schrift über die Philosophie und ihrer Principien, zu vorläufiger Prüfung vorgelegt," *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten* 3, no. 2 (1795): 95–132. (Though dated 1795, the issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* containing Schmid's article was not actually published until February 1796.)

[2]Fichte's lengthy exposition of Schmid's system is summarized above in the editor's preface.

tions, which are thought to lie within him, and things, which are thought to lie outside of him. Representations differ completely in nature and in essence from things, though the latter correspond perfectly to the former. Representations are exact images of things: this is what one assumes at first. But as soon as one starts to reflect a bit upon this remarkable harmony and the reasons which lead us to assert that there is such a harmony, one begins to have doubts about it and begins to examine the basis of this assumed harmony. Answering *this* question has been the final aim of all philosophy from the start. If (as *I* at least believe) Kant has recently succeeded in answering this question, his answer has still not yet been understood; for the question continues to be repeated loudly enough by many persons who are capable of grasping Kant's
II,435 answer and who know what can be demanded of philosophy. In my opinion, *the following question is the one which philosophy has to answer: What is the connection between our representations and their objects? To what extent can we say that something independent of our representations, something altogether independent of and external to us, corresponds to our representations?* (This is a historical claim, in support of which I appeal to the better contemporary philosophical authors, as well as to the entire history of philosophy.)

It goes without saying that philosophical judgment goes to work in a systematic fashion to answer this question or to try to answer it. But in addition to *this* systematic enterprise, there is *another* kind of inquiry, which has the same *form* as the first sort but has an entirely different *object.* In inquiries of this second type, what one argues about are *our representations* alone or the *things* alone (and if one presupposes a complete harmony between representations and things then these two types of argument are in fact one and the same). What one does not argue about in such cases is *the connection between representations and things.* This is the origin of inquiries like physics and chemistry. All the things which have their origin in that activity of the human spirit which we have just described go by the general name of "the sciences." The overwhelming majority of philosophical authors, as well as the best ones, have always agreed among themselves that philosophy should be considered as a *separate science in its own right* and, accordingly, that it should be carefully distinguished from and opposed to *scientific argument as such*[3]—whether the distinction is a basic or merely a superficial one. Every science presupposes that our representations correspond to things outside of us, and this presupposition is the condition for the possibility of all science. Philosophy's task is to confirm this presupposition. Thus it is only through philosophy that our *representing* becomes *knowing.* Philosophy,

[3]"dass die Philosophie als eine *Wissenschaft für sich* betrachtet, dass sie sonach vom *wissenschaftlichen Raisonnement überhaupt* . . . sorgfältig unterschieden, und ihm entgegengesetzt werden."

therefore, has recently been characterized as a "science of science," or as a "Theory of Scientific Knowledge" or *Wissenschaftslehre,* in order thereby to distinguish it sharply from every other science.[4]

It is a matter of general experience that there is a distinction between our representations and things, and that we always assume the harmony
II,436 of the two in our lives. If someone were to deny that *he* personally assumes any such harmony, then we could show him on the spot that he could then neither wish for nor accomplish anything at all. But it is also a matter of experience for everyone who has begun to engage in a bit of self-reflection that doubt concerning the basis for this assumption soon arises.

If such doubt could ever arise among men, then it must be possible to resolve it, and it really must be resolved. It is insufficient to dismiss the doubters along with their questions, while complaining about their inquisitiveness and advising them to avoid such questions. Once they have come this far, they *cannot* follow such advice. Either the sought-for basis of this harmony must really become evident, or else everyone must become convinced *that* no such ground can be made evident and *why* this is impossible.

What is the relation of Professor Schmid's system to this task? It entirely ignores it. His system does not assume this task at all; it does not even make the distinction which occasions this task. What do we find within consciousness: the *representation* of an understanding and a will? or *this understanding and this will themselves?* Are these faculties only *represented* within consciousness? Or *do they present themselves to consciousness?* Professor Schmid does not deal with this distinction. [He says that] the understanding is connected with the things of nature. Is it connected immediately with these things themselves? Or does this connection require that representations of an external manifold must occur within the understanding? Professor Schmid seems to assume the former, but how does he know this to be the case? By means of a fact of consciousness! But a fact of consciousness cannot be anything but a specific determination of consciousness itself. Thus a fact of consciousness can be nothing more than a representation; it cannot be something which is supposed to lie entirely outside of the I. Consequently, the most that we can meet with in consciousness is the *representation* of a connection between the understanding and the things of nature, but by no means this connection itself. Accordingly the connection and its representation are consid-
II,437 ered to be the same thing and are already presupposed to be identical;

[4]The author of this "recent characterization of philosophy" was, of course, Fichte himself. See, e.g., *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre, or, of So-called "Philosophy,"* translated above, Section III.

no attempt is made to distinguish between them, and thus there can be no question of discovering the basis of their harmony.

Professor Schmid always considers representations to be the same as what corresponds to them. The entire inner and outer world is already finished; its manifold is something given and is determined entirely by itself: this is the point where Schmid's philosophy begins, and he considers it to be fantasy and nonsense to go beyond this point. Philosophy only supervenes upon this manifold and gives it a systematic order. Philosophy performs precisely that task which we have just ascribed to mere scientific argument. Thus, for Professor Schmid, *philosophy* and *science* are entirely the same (p. 111).[5] He considers all systematic thinking, whatever its object may be, to be philosophy. And if someone were, for example, to systematize the art of tailoring, this would constitute a part of Schmid's *applied* philosophy, which, according to p. 118, "is infinite and includes *every* manifold which presents itself to us, to the extent that it lends itself to being developed and represented in accordance with laws."

Since this is the way things stand, anyone who adopts the view that we previously expressed concerning philosophy's aim and nature will have to deny the name "philosophy" to Schmid's system entirely, since this system begins just where what most people have previously thought of as philosophy ceases. Furthermore, since Professor Schmid totally rejects and denies the possibility of going beyond his system, he also—in the eyes of someone who shares our view of philosophy—denies all philosophy, abolishes it altogether, and leaves us with nothing but science.

Once all of this has been duly understood, then Schmid's system is the most convenient one ever. It puts aside all those questions over which philosophers have racked their brains, and it sticks to the sure fund of previous experience, under the name of a priori and a posteriori facts.
II,438 Thus, right from the start we possess an infinite number of immediate truths, which require no proof or further clarification. All that one is permitted to do is to argue over these facts—and which of our contemporaries cannot do that? I know of no system which is comparable to Professor Schmid's in terms of straightforwardness and ease—with the possible exception of the one presented by Professor Tiedemann in his *Theätet.*[6]

[5]All of the citations in this essay are from Schmid's "Bruckstücke."

[6]Dietrich Tiedemann (1748–1803) was a professor of philosophy and classical philology at Giessen and the author of a seven-volume *History of Speculative Philosophy* (1791–97) and of a three-volume *Investigation of Man* (1777–98), which is notable primarily because of the manner in which it reduces epistemological and ontological issues to psychological and physiological ones. Tiedemann's own system presents an eclectic blend of Lockean and Leibnizian elements. His *Theätet oder über das menschliche Wissen, ein Beytrag zur Vernunft-*

The way in which one keeps oneself within these modest boundaries and prevents anything from pushing one over them is just as simple: one just does not deal with such matters and solemnly swears that he will not deal with them. In this respect Schmid's system is quite similar to Platner's[7] skepticism, except that the latter is better natured and allows those who think differently from him to coexist alongside of him. Professor Schmid, in contrast, looks quite askance at everything which cannot be fit into his scheme and explains such things, without any further ado, as fantasies and figments of idle imagination.

Finally, Professor Schmid's system splendidly meets the most pressing philosophical need of our age. The Kantian philosophy has raised a stir which has caused many people to look for something remarkable behind this philosophy. Now Professor Schmid, who is thought to be one of the earliest and most conscientious experts on the Kantian philosophy, removes once and for all any trace of difficulty from this philosophy. He produces the desired eternal peace and engenders the most intimate bond between dogmatic and Critical philosophers. For Professor Schmid, the world is something which is completely finished without any assistance from reason; everything is just as it is. More is thereby conceded to the dogmatist than he ever coveted in his wildest dreams. Critical idealism, which was once so difficult that the typical sort of "Kantian" preferred not to bother with it, now takes on a meaning which is *so very easy* to grasp. All that Critical idealism amounts to now is the assertion *that we have the capacity to systematize our own knowledge!* The dogmatists will be fair and will permit the Critical idealists to engage in such systematizing. The Kantians are also thereby delivered from a great predicament which they faced, quite apart from their feud with the dogmatists. They could neither escape from their own dogmatism nor
II,439 square it with many assertions made by Kant—to whose flag, after all, they had pledged allegiance. There ensued within them a ceaseless struggle between nature and official duty. Schmid brings this conflict to an end, for he gives an interpretation to Kant's troubling remarks which will present no danger at all to the dogmatists. The Kantians will undoubtedly make immediate use of this discovery. It is only to be hoped that they will leave the honor of this invention—or, as he would prefer to say, *discovery*—to Professor Schmid, and that they will treat him better

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Kritik (1794) is an anti-Kantian tract written in defense of the "objective validity" of human knowledge.

[7]Ernst Platner (1744–1818) was a professor of philosophy at Leipzig and expounded a skeptical variety of empiricism. His *Philosophischen Aphorismen* (1776 and 1782) was a popular textbook which went through several editions in his lifetime. Indeed, it was the text Fichte adopted for use in the introductory course titled "Logic and Metaphysics," which he offered every semester following his return from Osmannstädt in the fall of 1796 (see note 69 to the editor's introduction).

than they have treated another famous philosophical author, whose writings are the true source of their Kantianism, and toward whom only a few of them have shown the gratitude they owe.[8]

Now that we have this explanation [of the true meaning of Kant's philosophy], the only thing that remains remarkable is how so much ado could have been made over nothing, and why Kant fashioned such powerful tools merely to prove the very simple proposition that we have the capacity to argue about things in the world. Another thing that remains remarkable is why Professor Schmid calls Kant a great man, for anyone who, in obscure and ponderous writings, employs his acumen and subtlety to confirm laboriously something of the utmost triviality, something which no one has ever doubted, is certainly a very ordinary man. Or is this encomium a mere courtesy?

Relation of This System to the *Wissenschaftslehre* in Particular

I do not by any means presume to judge in public all the new philosophizing which occurs in the world or to compare it to my own system. And I would have kept just as silent over Professor Schmid's article as I have over the writings of other authors had he not, by undertaking a
II,440 comparison between his system and mine from his side, forced me to continue this comparison from my perspective. On p. 106 Schmid says the following: "Recently, a bold attempt has been made to unite the starting point of philosophy with its end point. This has been done by substituting an idealistic absolute for the concept, which does occur in consciousness, of a knowing subject, and then, on every occasion, deriving from the wealth of this fictitious infinity just what and just so much as one thinks that one needs for the derivation of all that occurs within consciousness." On p. 101 he says: "Any philosophy whose object is the human mind is, to the extent that we are not immediately conscious of the mind's properties, a thoroughly transcendent philosophy, and is thus empty and groundless—an idle figment of the imagination." In a note to this passage he elaborates upon it as follows: "Every philosophy which forsakes the limits of possible experience and consciousness is in this sense transcendent.* It is immaterial whether the philosophy in

[8]Probably an allusion to Reinhold, whose *Letters concerning the Kantian Philosophy* (1786–87) contributed greatly to the first popular wave of enthusiasm for Kant's philosophy. Concerning Reinhold, see the editor's preface to Section I, above.

*An expression which is employed nowadays to designate something which one does not understand. For the same purpose others employ the word *hypercritical,* though both words mean the same thing.

question tries to determine the object in itself, along with its effects, or whether it tries to determine the subject in itself, along with its acts, and wants to use these to explain consciousness itself, along with its original representations." There can be no doubt whatsoever that the system here repudiated is supposed to be the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

I will begin by presenting a short sketch of my system. Incidentally, the very brevity of this sketch might help to introduce my system to readers who are afraid of the book itself (which is said to be so enormously difficult).

What is the basis for our claim that there is something outside of us which corresponds to our representations? I believe that it is the proper task of philosophy to answer this question. And this is the task assumed by the
II,441 *Wissenschaftslehre,* which answers this question as follows: *the representation and the object which is supposed to correspond to it are one and the same thing—merely regarded from two different points of view.* But *that* it must be looked at from these two different points of view is something which follows from the *knowable* nature of reason itself (which is *what we are trying to present*), and, as such, it is something *necessary* and must be *seen* as necessary. The *Wissenschaftslehre* provides us with an understanding of how and why a rational being distinguishes these two things (which are nevertheless the same) and yet still must subsequently judge them to be entirely identical—apart, that is, from the freedom characteristic of representations as such and the necessity characteristic of objects.

This question troubled me from my earliest years. Kant only furnished me with a new stimulus, which by itself was not sufficient: I answered the question entirely independently of that great man, in my own manner and in the course of my own development. It was only later that I became convinced that Kant had dealt with the same question in its entire scope and that he had answered it, and answered it in exactly the same way as the *Wissenschaftslehre.* I do not think it superfluous to clarify my relation to Kant occasionally when the opportunity presents itself. But *prove it? To whom* ought I to prove it? Before I can do so, someone must understand either the *Wissenschaftslehre* or else Kant's writings. The former has scarcely been read to date, and the latter, in my opinion, will never be understood by anyone who has not already made Kant's way of thinking his own. And—again, in my opinion—no one until now has shown that he has understood this way of thinking.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* proceeds in the following manner: It asks everyone to attend to himself, to what he does when he says to himself, "I"—namely, to what he does *as such and with absolute necessity.* (Everything depends upon this last point, but very few persons are able to lift themselves to this absolute, with its total abstraction from all individuality.) What the *Wissenschaftslehre* postulates is that anyone who actually accomplishes the act requested will find *that he posits himself* or (to express this in

II,442 another way, which many persons find clearer) *that he is at once subject and object.* I-hood[9] consists in this absolute identity of subject and object. *The I is what cannot be the subject without, in the same undivided act, being the object, and cannot be the object without, in the same undivided act, being the subject. And conversely, anything which can be characterized in this way is the I. Both expressions say exactly the same thing.*

All philosophy springs from this identity and from it alone; not the least additional thing is required. This identity answers once and for all the question concerning the bond between subject and object, for it shows that they are originally bound together in I-hood. Right from the start this identity serves to establish *Critical idealism,* that is, *the identity of ideality and reality.* This is not the sort of idealism which considers the I only as a subject, nor is it the sort of dogmatism which considers the I only as an object.

This description (viz., that the I is what simply posits itself, what is at once subject and object) is, however, not sufficient. It is no more than a formula, and for those who do not breathe life into it by an inner intuition which they themselves produce, it remains an empty, dead, and unintelligible figure of speech. An inner act is required of the student of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* He is requested "to be subject and object at once," so that he can discover the identity in question within himself. Anyone who is incapable of doing this (and, for reasons which will be explained by the *Wissenschaftslehre* at the appropriate time, some persons are simply incapable of doing this) will not obtain a self-produced subject-object (as I will call it for short). Instead, he will obtain a mere object, which has been given to him from without by his teacher. Thus he will quite properly ask about the basis for this fiction—for it is and remains a fiction to him. His only mistake is that he thought that something was supposed to be *given* to him, whereas *he was supposed to draw it from himself* instead. What is received from without, just because it is received from without, is not what we are talking about at all. The *Wissenschaftslehre* does not say,
II,443 "Comprehend what people say to you"; it says, instead: "Comprehend yourself; construe yourself in the way that I say, and observe how this occurs."[10] With its first proposition the *Wissenschaftslehre* succeeds in establishing not just philosophy in its entirety, but also the conditions for all philosophizing. This proposition serves to reject not only everything which, but also everyone who does not belong within the domain of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*

This science simply cannot do anything to convince anyone who does not wish to satisfy this condition, that is, who will not produce an intui-

[9]"Ichheit."

[10]"Begreife dich selbst; construire dich selbst, dass ich so sage, und siehe, wie dies zugeht."

tion of his own I within himself, or who is unable to do so. It can indeed cause such a person so much anxiety that he won't know whether he is coming or going—unless he simply stops up his ears and absolutely refuses to have anything to do with this science. It can show him that he contradicts himself on every side and that he takes a step backward for every one he takes forward. But it cannot provide him with a truth which cannot be provided from without and which one has to produce within oneself. This is something that not even God himself can do.

But if the *Wissenschaftslehre* admits that it is unable to convince everyone, can it then be the universal philosophy? If, as it of course claims, it is the only true philosophy, then it is also the universal philosophy. Yet perhaps philosophy as such is not something which can become universal. But if this is true then I fail to see the problem. It is no more necessary that all men should be philosophers than it is necessary that they should all be poets or artists. It would, however, be nice if those who lack true philosophical talent would not meddle with philosophy at all and would not lead good, credulous people into error. Or, if they wish to continue to call their arguing by the name "philosophy," then let us relinquish to them this name, with which they will have to make do, and let us take another name to mark out a narrower circle for ourselves. And then let us warn them earnestly not to trespass on this domain.

The first principle that we have just established furnishes us with the whole of philosophy itself: the latter is no more than a complete analysis
II,444 of the former. "What is one really thinking when one thinks this proposition?" asks the philosopher, and philosophy in its entirety is an exhaustive answer to this question.

What is it that is to be analyzed here? The I: moreover, the I as it is has here been established, that is, as subject-object, and *insofar as it is both,* that is, insofar as it acts. What is to be analyzed is that *single* act in which the I is both, that act through which the I becomes an I and *which* everyone can *furnish for himself* by fulfilling our first postulate. In the course of the analysis, the act in question is *divided* and *thus appears to be several acts.* The *reality* of what we are going to analyze is guaranteed by the inner act we have described. This act actually occurs; it is actually performed by the person who undertakes it, and thus it possesses reality. Everything that is established thereafter is only an analysis of *this act itself.* Thus everything that is established in this way possesses the same reality that the act itself does. The *correctness of the analytic procedure* is guaranteed by the laws of thinking.* Now if, in that series of acts, *which*

*Let me add, not for the scholars (who know nothing about the *Wissenschaftslehre*), but for the benefit of any readers of this article who may have become more closely acquainted with the *Wissenschaftslehre* through attending my lectures, and in order not to confuse them: It is only the philosopher's own procedure in dealing with the first principle that is *analytic.* However, the procedure and mode of acting of the I—which is what the philosopher is investigating—is *synthetic.*

exists as a series only for analytic judgment, but which, considered in itself, is only a single act, one thinks of the I qua object, then what one has are the *things* (i.e., what Kant called "intuition"). If, in the same series, one thinks of the I qua subject, then what one has is the *concept.* But the analysis which occurs in the *Wissenschaftslehre* establishes the I neither as a subject nor as an object, but as both at once. Accordingly, this analysis allows the concept and the thing *to come into being at the same time,* and this makes it possible for the mind's inner eye to see that the concept and the thing are one and the same—merely regarded from two different sides. This is the same thing that Kant expressed by saying that the concept and the intuition (or, in the language of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* the "thing") could not be separated from each other.*

II,445 In order to promote clarity, I add what follows. In all thinking one can distinguish the act of thinking from the object of thinking, and this holds for philosophical thinking as well. If one philosophizes in Professor Schmid's manner, the object about which one philosophizes is always something *static and fixed.* In the *Wissenschaftslehre* the object is something *active,* and it is *presented in its activity.* This latter science does not propose to justify any system of things, but rather to describe a series of acts. It allows the I to act before its eyes, while it observes this acting. The I which it observes is not what might be called the "philosophizing I," which, as always happens when one contemplates anything, is lost in contemplation; instead, it is the common, ordinary I. All descriptions

*Kant begins his *Critique* with the I qua *mere subject,* and this is the source of the idea (which the Kantians have so laughably misinterpreted) that empty concepts exist a priori. But a subject is always related to an object and, at least in the obscurity of representation, is inseparable from an object. Therefore, Kant allows us (provisionally) to carry into the *Critique* the ordinary, commonsense view of the *object as something external to the I.* The I does not become an object until the middle of the book, *in the doctrine of the schematism of the imagination.* But what then happens to that thing in itself with which one has previously burdened oneself? All the misunderstandings of Kant's writings are based upon the thing in itself, and yet without the thing in itself one would have been able to understand *nothing at all.* Hence the complaint voiced by the excellent Jacobi (whose words of caution concerning the improper treatment of Critical idealism were too little heeded), namely, that he could not gain entrance into the *Critique* without presupposing things in themselves, but could not remain there as long as he retained this presupposition.[11] Of course, it is true that the passage which justifies one in dispensing with this tool [namely, the thing in itself] is found in the middle of the *Critique.* On the other hand, no one who has not already deposited this burden [viz., the thing in itself] at the door is admitted into the *Wissenschaftslehre.* For this reason the *Wissenschaftslehre* has usually been not so much misunderstood as not understood at all.

[11]F. H. Jacobi (1743–1819) was a distinguished novelist and essayist rather than a university professor. His works nevertheless exercised a great influence on the development of German idealism and early romanticism. His influence upon Fichte was especially marked. Jacobi's famous and frequently quoted criticism of Kant's doctrine of things in themselves occurs in the appendix to his 1787 work, *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus.* See Jacobi's *Werke,* vol. III (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1815), p. 304. For further information, see Hamilton Beck's English introduction to the recent reissue of Jacobi's *David Hume* (New York: Garland, 1983), pp. vii–xii. Concerning Fichte's relation to Jacobi, see letters 19 and 20 in Section X, below.

which occur in the *Wissenschaftslehre* are, therefore, genetic descriptions.[12] Thus the curtain which keeps the unconsecrated from entering the *Wissenschaftslehre* veils the entire domain of this science as well, for those who are unable to produce within themselves the act we have described and who do not actually produce this act really do see nothing and obtain nothing [from this science].

It is only in this way that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is able to accomplish what was demanded of philosophy. We have, for example, been told frequently enough which predicates describe representation. But what
II,446 we wanted to know was what *representation* really is. And this is something which can only be presented genetically, that is, insofar as one's own mind is engaged in this very act of representing.

"But," says Professor Schmid, "we are not immediately conscious of these properties of the mind, and every philosophy which goes beyond such immediate consciousness is empty and groundless, an idle figment of the imagination." (Note that Schmid talks about *properties*[13] of the mind, which is in accord with his manner of not being able to see anything which is not standing still. My philosophy prides itself on being able to apprehend things while they are in motion, and thus I talk about *acts* of the mind.) Later I will have something to say about Schmid's first assertion; here, a few words concerning the second are in order.

Professor Schmid has said that all philosophy which goes beyond the immediate facts of consciousness is empty and groundless, an idle figment of the imagination. Can he *prove* this? Can he even *desire* to prove it? Every reason or ground lies outside of what it is supposed to establish; consequently, the only way that one could prove that one cannot go beyond facts in philosophy would be if this very proof itself went beyond facts—and was thus, according to Schmid's own claim, an empty and groundless idle figment of the imagination. Schmid, therefore, has here said something which he can neither prove nor desire to prove. I wonder how Professor Schmid would tolerate it if, in the meantime, I were to assume (as a mere possibility) that what other philosophical authors, myself included, *say* must be just as valid as what Professor Schmid *says*. There is a lot that I might say about philosophers who stick with the alleged "facts of consciousness," without (as the very attempt to do so reveals) ever having considered what a "fact" might be. What can one say if they will not defend their assertions at all, but will only say: "this, in

[12]Concerning "genetic descriptions," see Fichte's comment in the "Second Introduction" to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, *SW*, I: 458 (*H/L*, p. 34): "First of all, what elements in the act described pertain to the philosopher engaged in philosophizing and which pertain to the I which he is supposed to observe? Nothing pertains to the I except its reversion into itself; everything else pertains to the relation thereto of the philosopher, for whom the system of all experience is already given as a mere fact, which is to be brought into being before his eyes by the I, so that he may become acquainted with the way in which it comes into being."

[13]"Beschaffenheiten."

sum, is how it is, and anyone who asks me any further questions about this is an idiot and a moral monster as well"? What couldn't one say about the pettiness, the narrow-mindedness, and the resolute indifference toward truth to which this manner of thinking testifies—or about the true source of this stubbornness, or the shameless presumption with which it maintains itself! Even then, I would still have an
II,447 advantage over Professor Schmid, since I could at least prove to others what I have said, because I claim that my standpoint is a far higher one, from which I can completely survey Schmid's standpoint. But I owe the public for whom I write the same respect which Professor Schmid has dispensed with by engaging in unsupported and—as he himself knows only too well—unsupportable invective.

In order to get a closer look at this fearsome apparition, let us ask what might actually be meant by saying: "something is immediately present within consciousness." The only tenable distinction with which I am acquainted among the objects of consciousness (i.e., objects of reflection) is the distinction between those which occur in consciousness *necessarily* and those which occur as a result of a *free* act of the mind. (And in the course of our investigations it will become clearer and clearer that this is the only possible distinction to be made among the objects of consciousness.) Professor Schmid will not wish to call anything which is produced freely by the mind an "immediate fact of consciousness." Thus he will apply this name only to what occurs in the mind necessarily. And what is this? There are only two standpoints from which one may consider this matter and raise this question: One may attend to *those things which, when one discovers oneself for the first time, one finds within oneself and which one feels must necessarily be found there* (i.e., one can attend to what one merely happens to *discover* without the least application of freedom); or else one may attend to *what is left over after one has made a complete employment of freedom in the act of abstraction* (i.e., *one can attend to what cannot be removed by any application of freedom*). The first point of view leads one to the discovery of the material world as it appears: a world of pure experience and nothing more, the material world just as it is, that is, just as it is presented to the senses. Very few men have a sense for pure experience, and it would be a great step forward if they only knew what it was that they really *experienced.* It is simply not true that what one is conscious of in this sense is a *representation;* all that one is here conscious of is a *thing.* One discovers *one's own self* only in the act of willing,
II,448 and indeed, of willing *something specific.* Even the *consciousness* of a representation is the result of a distinction, a distinction which the mind is required to make, thanks to a check which it experiences. For it discovers thereby *that the I itself is the willing subject,* and it discovers thereby that the thing, *insofar as it is an object of the will,* must lie *within the I itself,* whereas from the point of view of knowledge, the thing is supposed to lie *outside*

of the I. It is only in order to resolve this contradiction that a distinction is made between the representation and the thing; only for this reason is a representation of the thing posited within the I, a representation which is supposed to be something other than that external thing that it is supposed to represent. It is, therefore, not a "fact of consciousness" (in the first sense of the world "consciousness") that we engage in representation, but rather the "fact of consciousness" is that there are things. But what am I saying! Neither is it a fact of consciousness that there are things. That there are men, animals, trees, etc. is not a fact of consciousness; what is a fact of consciousness is only *that this specific individual man, this particular animal, and this specific tree* hovers before my eyes. Every generic concept presupposes a free act of abstraction. Thus the "facts of consciousness" which Professor Schmid proposes simply cannot be facts of consciousness in the first sense of the word.

Adopting the second of the previously indicated points of view, all that remains after abstraction has been completed (i.e., after we have abstracted from everything we can) is the *abstracting subject* itself, that is, the *I.* The I is what remains, and it is this *for itself;* thus it is a subject-object. The I which remains after abstraction is completed is the I with its original character, the I in its purity. I would rather not call this a *fact,* since the I does not remain left over in the manner of something found, that is, as an *object.* Instead, I would prefer to call it *an Act.*[14] (At least this is what it should be called if it is to have a name which bears some analogy with customary philosophical terminology, though the previous presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* was too influenced by such customary usage and thereby exposed itself to the distortions of the literalists.[15])

Only by means of free abstraction and only after being shaped by the imagination does what lies between these two extremes [i.e., between "things" and the "Act" of self-consciousness] become an object of consciousness.[16] For example, I abstract from the specific features of the
II,449 particular trees that I have seen; then I combine in one representation what all these trees have in common, and thus I obtain the concept of a tree as such. What image do I have of the "tree as such?" (Here I am speaking to those who are actually able to think for themselves, and not simply able to repeat what they have learned.) From where does this image come? Which tree in itself has inspired this image? I think that

[14]"Thathandlung."

[15]The "previous presentation" was that of 1794–95 (as first expounded in Fichte's "private" lectures and published in the *Foundations* and *Outline*). At the time he was writing his essay on Schmid, Fichte was already well aware of the need for an entirely new presentation of the first principles of his system.

[16]"Was zwischen diesen beiden Endpuncten liegt, ist Object des Bewusstseyns lediglich durch Freiheit der Abstraction, und Bildung durch die Einbildungskraft."

there is no doubt that this image is a product of the imagination. I obtain the concept of a *thing* as such by abstracting from the particular features of all of the things with which I am acquainted. Surely the image of this "thing as such" is also a product of my imagination. On account of the requirement indicated above, I have posited *myself* as a *knower* who is present in the knowledge of *this* object, of a second object, of a third, etc. Abstracting from the particular features of every act of knowing, I posit myself *as the knower as such.* I do this in exactly the same way that I previously posited a tree as such, namely, by separating the representation in question from the other predicates which I ascribe to myself, fixing this representation in the concept of a *faculty of knowledge* or an *understanding,* and furnishing this concept with an image, so that I can say, "look, this is my understanding." Now let me ask each of you: How does "the understanding" become an object of consciousness? Is it anything but a product of free imagination, and indeed, a product of a highly complex and contingent operation of my imagination? Even the original separation of a *knowing I* from *something known* (which is not-I only *if this separation has already taken place*) was something which occurred freely. Isn't it the same free act which first makes possible everything else? It bores me to death to have to be so long-winded, and yet I know that for the greater portion of my readers what I am saying is not so much *incomprehensible* as it is *incredible,* because it has the weight of habit against it. Nevertheless, the will, consciousness, even the I itself, insofar as it is an object of consciousness, occur in consciousness in just the way that I have indicated and in no other way. It is true fanaticism to think seriously that abstract entities like these are actual, completely determinate things. (Even the philosophers we have been talking about do not do this seriously; they do not do anything at all—at least not with
II,450 their minds. Not even they themselves understand what they are talking about.) To ascribe reality to the *free* products of one's imagination is real madness.

Is there then no understanding or will present within consciousness? When I undertake the previously described act of abstraction, the concept of these faculties undoubtedly does arise for me; since a concept like this arises for me only insofar as I reflect upon it, I am also conscious of it. But I am not conscious of these faculties unless I engage in this act of abstraction. But aren't they really there whether I am conscious of them or not? Aren't they present, so to speak, as *an understanding in itself and as a will in itself*—which, if science only continues to make the excellent progress toward general edification which it has made so far, will finally be revealed by the anatomist's knife and pickled in alcohol, enabling our descendants to mail each other pieces of well-preserved understanding or half a dozen categories? Since there is nothing further that can be said about such nonsense, please permit me to disregard it.

The *Wissenschaftslehre* begins from the second of the two extremes indicated above. It begins with what is left and cannot be further analyzed after everything else has been removed; that is, it begins with the raw material of everything that can ever occur in consciousness, the material from which everything that has ever occurred in consciousness has developed. From this starting point it proceeds in the direction of the opposite extreme, that is, toward actual existence. Thus it retraces the path of abstraction, or rather, it permits the I to retrace this path, while it [the *Wissenschaftslehre*] observes this process. Before its eyes, the I combines those elements which were previously separated by means of abstraction. Just as the chemist reassembles from its elements the body which has previously been analyzed, and only then is he sure that he has learned nature's secret, so too does the transcendental philosopher proceed in the same manner. It may be possible to skip a step along the path of abstraction, but this is not possible along the path of construction.

II,451 Do these acts of combination which the *Wissenschaftslehre* ascribes to the I along this latter path really occur in consciousness? I think that if anyone actually pursues the path of synthesis which is marked out by the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and if he reflects upon himself while he is doing this, then he will become conscious of his internal actions. If, however. he does not follow this path and does not do what he is asked to do by the *Wissenschaftslehre,* then, of course, nothing like these acts will be present within his consciousness. For everything between these two extremes [of the I and the thing, i.e., every representation] that occurs in consciousness does so only upon the condition that one posits it explicitly—and this includes Schmid's "facts of consciousness." Accordingly, the various elements of the *Wissenschaftslehre* would have the same status as Schmid's facts, and thus it is absolutely incomprehensible why Schmid should claim that the former lie beyond the boundaries of consciousness.

However, this entire act through which the I posits itself, while at the same time positing within itself everything that exists, is an act which *actually does occur.* And in this act the I and everything that exists are posited in their original unity and wholeness. It is only the philosopher who destroys the unity of this act and allows it to occur only in part. He does this in order to understand the act in question. This act is all that ever was, is, or will be; as soon as anything exists, this act exists. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is, therefore, a *thoroughly real philosophy,*[17] in which, by its very nature, there is no room for any free imaginative fabrication at all.

So I repeat my question: How are Schmid's "facts of consciousness" supposed to be "factual" in a way that the various elements of the *Wissenschaftslehre* are not? Perhaps they are supposed to be so in the latter sense

[17] "*Ein durchaus reele Philosophie.*" I.e, a philosophy that deals exclusively with real objects ("acts" and "facts") and not with imaginary or "ideal" objects.

[i.e., not as "things," but as the indissoluble residue of abstraction]. If this is so, then what Schmid's assertion would amount to is the claim that we cannot abstract from the will and the understanding, that these faculties simply remain after we have finished abstracting. If this is his opinion, then he must fall silent before anyone who nevertheless claims—as does the *Wissenschaftslehre*—to be able to abstract from these faculties. He can only stand there defenselessly; for how can he deter-
II,452 mine the possibility of something which he is personally unable to accomplish? He must qualify his proposition accordingly: that I am unable to go any further than this with my abstracting is a fact of my individual—Schmidian—consciousness, a fact which unpleasant experience has sufficiently demonstrated to me.

But this cannot be what Professor Schmid meant to say, for of course he is able to abstract from these faculties, and he does so over and over again before our eyes. That from which one simply cannot abstract can only be something singular. But Schmid proposes something which is threefold: reason, understanding, and will. Whenever he speaks of one of these he has to abstract from the other two, and he does so endlessly in his article. What in the world could he then have meant?

The matter becomes even stranger when we consider the following: The concepts of understanding and will have their origin in abstraction. They are encountered right in the middle of that path of abstraction which we indicated above—as anyone who makes the experiment will discover for himself. Once abstraction has risen to this level it is already in flight and it ascends higher almost irresitably. On what possible basis can philosophers insist that abstraction can go no higher and that, though it has proceeded so well so far, abstraction can go no further once it reaches this point? My task will not be accomplished until I have answered this question. Nor will the reader be satisfied; instead, his soul will continue to harbor a secret doubt, which is based upon his belief in the authority of the great men of our philosophical era.

As children, we learn many words without associating—or being able to associate—any precise meaning with them. These words are thereby deposited in our memory, along with an imprecise image. There they lie ineradicably, unless an early inner spontaneity at least once casts aside
II,453 everything we have learned, until such time as we can either discover good reasons for reassuming these things or are able to replace them with something better—that is, unless at least once in our lives we succeed in doubting everything and in making ourselves into a completely blank slate. Anyone who is not conscious of having gone through such a state may be certain in advance that his philosophizing will not be of any great benefit either to himself or to other people. Even if some genius were able to hand such a person the unadulterated truth, this would not be of any help. Such a truth could never become his own, because he

would not have produced it from himself. It would be and would remain a foreign addition. Suppose that such a person—assiduously and with the best will in the world—were to look into himself and to cast aside everything which, to the best of his knowledge, is present within him as a result of freedom: something whose origin he does not know would always remain left over for him at the bottom. "Oh," he would think, "this remainder must constitute my original nature." But alas, it is nothing more than the impression made on him by his nurse, his nanny, and his catechism. But these have all received what they pass on to him in the same way that he received it. The floods of time have covered the name of the great man who first created it out of the depths of his own soul and from whom it has been passed down through thousands and thousands of hands to the nurse and catechism of the person in question. In this manner there arises what might be called a "primary system."[18] Each generation inherits this primary system from all the previous generations; without having to do any work of its own, it receives this inheritance. The philosopher always speaks of this primary system with respect, despite the fact that he himself is a late-born child, thrust from his father's house to make his uncertain way in the wide world. This primary system is roughly the same for all civilized nations; argument about it consists largely in nothing more than inspecting it and coming up with new combinations of these original, secure possessions. The form of this primary system is always changing, and, for people like the ones we have been describing, all new discoveries are simply new formal styles. At one
II,454 moment such people follow the model of mathematics in preparing their tables; when this goes out of fashion, they pattern their tables on the table of categories: quantity, quality, relation, modality. But the content always remains the same ancient catechism. This explains why listeners and readers of the ordinary type find certain sermons, lectures, and writings to be extraordinarily intelligible, while the original thinker is unable to understand a single word that is said: for, in fact, there is no understanding involved in all this. Such readers are like the elderly lady who attends church regularly (for whom, incidentally, I have the highest respect) and who finds a sermon to be very intelligible and edifying if it contains plenty of sayings and verses which she already knows by heart and is able to repeat along with the minister. Such readers (who consider themselves far superior to such a churchgoer) find a text to be especially instructive and clear when it tells them something they already know, and they find proofs to be very stringent when they demonstrate what they already believe. The pleasure which a reader of this type takes in an author is a secret pleasure in himself: "What a great man," he thinks to himself. "It is as if I were reading or hearing my own words!"

[18]"ein Grundsystem."

This primary system includes the proposition that we have an understanding and a will. Most catechisms teach this explicitly: "Man is a being who possesses understanding and will." The first person who said this discovered it within himself. He knew where he obtained this truth, and he was a great man. Thousands more may have later discovered this in the same way; they were also great men like him. But anyone who just stands there and says "this is an immediate fact of consciousness for me" proves thereby that it is not true *for him.* The very way in which he establishes his proposition shows that *for him* there is neither an understanding nor a will, that he has obtained all of this only on hearsay and from his catechism.

Thus the astonishment with which we were struck is dispelled. Had these philosophers obtained those concepts [viz., understanding and will] by means of abstraction, then of course they would have known where the path of abstraction leads from there. But they did not obtain these concepts by following this path. For such philosophers these concepts really are *something which is originally given* to them, that is, externally given
II,455 to them in childhood, and thus their affirmation is certainly justified to the extent that it applies to them and to those like them. They do not wish to deceive anyone about this; they really do not know any better. Thus to credit them with making errors in abstraction is to do them far too much honor. They are entirely innocent of any such error, since they have not engaged in abstraction at all. All that they are qualified to do, and all that they are in fact concerned to do, is to present in various forms something which already exists, to systematize it and then to systematize it again, until it finally takes on a certain style. But few are candid enough to make no secret of this and to say it as openly as Professor Schmid. This is to his credit, for it shows that he does indeed know what he is doing—which is something which many do not know. For the sake of his colleagues in this enterprise too, it is a good thing that someone has finally, freely, and frankly said what is going on.

Take a good look, you gullible and far too patient German people, thirsting for education! There they stand. These are the men you admire and from whom you expect enlightenment.

What then is the relation between Schmid's system and the *Wissenschaftslehre?* I can make this clearer if I may include Reinhold's system in the comparison.[19] Both Reinhold and Schmid begin their philosophies with facts. The former, with a sense of what is truly philosophical, begins with facts in order to ascend to the foundation of these fact; the latter does so in order to descend to the consequences of these facts—in order

[19]Concerning Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy and its relation to the *Wissenschaftslehre,* see above, editor's preface to Section I, as well as the letters from Fichte to Reinhold included in Section X.

to arrange them and to argue about them in various ways. Reinhold's procedure would be the reverse of that of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* if only such a reversal were possible, and if only one were able, by ascending from what is founded to its foundation, to arrive at an ultimate foundation. But this series is endless. The *Wissenschaftslehre* descends from the ultimate foundation, which it possesses, to the things which are based upon this foundation: from the absolute to the conditioned elements contained within the absolute—that is, to the actual, true facts of consciousness. Thus the *Wissenschaftslehre ends* just where Professor Schmid's philosophy *begins.* It is irrelevant to this point that the former refuses to
II,456 allow Professor Schmid's facts to count for facts as such, and that the *Wissenschaftslehre* descends further than the starting point of Schmid's philosophy. Briefly, the *Wissenschaftslehre* concludes with immediate facts of consciousness, whereas Schmid begins with what he also considers to be immediate facts of consciousness. The former ends by establishing *pure experience.*[20] It illuminates what we *actually can experience* and *must* experience; in doing this it truly does establish the basis for *the possibility of all experience.* Concerning this pure experience itself, one can argue forever: it can be arranged in new combinations; it can be systematized. I call this the work of *science,* which begins where philosophy ends and whose scope is endless. Thus *science* and *philosophy* are not at all the same, but are two different things, whereas for Professor Schmid they are the same. What Professor Schmid calls "philosophy" is what I would call "science." And yet I would not even call what Professor Schmid is doing "science," for I think that what Professor Schmid proposes as the object of his scientific enterprise is, in part, not experience at all, but consists instead of abstractions, and that the rest of it consists of impure and unrefined experience. Thus, in my view, it is not science at all; it is nothing, something without a name.

Conversely, my philosophy is also nothing for Professor Schmid, on account of incapacity—just as his philosophy is nothing for me, on account of understanding. He is unable to enter the realm which I embrace; he cannot even put a foot across its border. Where I am, he never is. We do not have a single point in common, on the basis of which we might be able to reach a mutual understanding. He has previously admitted that he did not understand the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[21] Perhaps he hoped that this admission would dispose of it. But he now seems to regret having made this admission, for he does not appear to have expected that I would dare to believe it. He has to have his say. But I understand him very well; I also understand the *Wissenschaftslehre,* and I

[20] "der reinen Empirie."

[21] Namely, in an editorial remark to a review (by F. A. Weisshuhn) of Fichte's *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* which Schmid published in 1794 in his own *Philosophisches Journal für Moralität, Religion und Menschenwohl* (see *AA* I, 3: 265n.).

hereby declare, with full justification, that his lack of understanding continues still and that he himself may well not realize the full extent of
II,457 his own lack of understanding. I maintain, furthermore, that he does not have the faintest idea of, or the least need for, that which the *Wissenschaftslehre* asks for, seeks, and provides. Whatever the *Wissenschaftslehre* might be in itself, it is at least not up to Professor Schmid to judge it, since it lies in a world which does not exist for him at all—for he lacks the sense through which it becomes present to one. If it is a painting which is supposed to be evaluated, one listens to the opinion of people that can see. However bad a painting may be, I do not think that it should be criticized by people who are blind from birth.

I am firmly convinced that Professor Schmid will never acquire this sense (though one might hope that a young person who lacks it might be able to acquire it). For half a lifetime he has demonstrated his absolute inability to tear himself away *from what is given* and his utter incapacity to imagine any true spontaneity. Indeed, the idea of spontaneity, which is the exclusive condition for understanding the *Wissenschaftslehre,* is so entirely lacking from all of his philosophical writings that one can, without the slightest risk of being proved wrong, be sure in advance that he will never possess the requisite sense.

Since this is the way things stand, I would like to make the following declaration, which, as I have now demonstrated, I am perfectly entitled to make. I hereby declare that everything that Professor Schmid henceforth has to say concerning any of my philosophical assertions—whether he says it straightforwardly or obliquely, and wherever he says it, whether in philosophical journals and annals, in reviews, in his lectures, or in any other respectable or unrespectable place—I hereby declare *to be something which does not exist at all as far as I am concerned.* And I declare Professor Schmid himself to be *nonexistent as a philosopher* so far as I am concerned.

The only legitimate recourse which I can see that Professor Schmid might take against this act of annihilation is perhaps to claim that I have presented his system incorrectly. Since I am quite serious in my wish never to return to this matter, let me say in advance that this act of annihilation is based only upon the following claims of Professor
II,458 Schmid's: *It is an immediate fact of consciousness that man has a will and an understanding and that these faculties are connected to nature. No philosophy can go beyond these facts. Philosophy consists in unifying the manifold of the former* [understanding and will] *and the latter* [nature] *in a single system.* If Professor Schmid cannot deny making these claims (as he obviously cannot), then I stand by the above declaration.

IX

Annals of Philosophical Tone [Excerpt]

Editor's Preface

"Annalen des philosophischen Tons" was the title Fichte gave to what was intended to be a series of articles exploring the proper manner of carrying on philosophical discussion and reviewing the characteristic "tone" of contemporary debate in this field. Only one installment of the projected series was ever published, though a second was prepared for publication.[1] Bearing the subtitle "First Installment: Examination of a Review Written in a Plaintive Tone," Fichte's article appeared in February of 1797 in the *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten,* vol. 5, no. 1—the first issue of that journal to appear under Fichte's coeditorship.[2]

The topic of this essay was a particularly sensitive one for Fichte, who was often criticized for the unnecessarily aggressive and contentious tone of his own writings.[3] Moreover, many of the published criticisms of

[1]Though no further installments in this series were ever published by Fichte, an untitled and unfinished draft of what was surely meant to be a later installment in the series was published by Friedrich Dannenberg under the title "Eine bisher unveröffentliche Abhandlung Fichtes gegen das Unwesen der Kritik," in *Kant-Studien* 16 (1911): 361–72. This same text also appears in *AA* under the title (supplied by the editors) "Ueber den in philosophischen Streitigkeiten geziemenden Ton," *AA* II, 5: 43–53. (Incidentally, this manuscript does *not* seem to be the projected second installment—"concerning reviews written in a superior tone"—which Fichte mentions in the published article.)

[2]The issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* which included Fichte's "Annals of Philosophical Tone" appeared in two separate printings. The first printing, published in February 1797, was withdrawn from circulation because of the large number of printer's errors it contained. A new printing (by a different printer) was issued at the end of March. The differences between the two published versions of Fichte's texts are very minor, but are noted in the critical edition of the text published in *AA* I, 4: 293–321.

[3]As Xavier Léon has pointed out (Léon, *Fichte et son temps,* I: 405–6), the very title of Fichte's article contains an ironic allusion to a critical remark about Fichte's own "superior tone." This remark, along with the accompanying charge that Fichte was no real friend of truth, appeared in a review article by J. C. Sommer which was published in the October

Fichte's philosophy were themselves written in the most sarcastic and condescending tone. Not content merely to misrepresent his views, some of Fichte's anonymous critics went out of their way to attack him personally and to accuse him of holding dangerous religious and political opinions. Consequently, Fichte's examination of the question of the appropriate tone for philosophical debate was not a dispassionate inquiry into a subject of contemporary importance. On the contrary, it was itself a highly polemical contribution to an ongoing controversy. It goes beyond analysis to self-defense, and beyond self-defense to include violent attacks on some of his (anonymous) critics. From beginning to end, the "Annals of Philosophical Tone" is informed by a sense of high moral outrage and is itself written in a tone that scandalized and offended even Fichte's supporters.[4]

The specific occasion for the published first installment of the "Annals of Philosophical Tone" was an anonymous review of Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* which appeared in the *Göttingenische Anzeigen* in December 1796. This review is a good example of the sort of unfair criticism that so galled Fichte, for it not only falsified the arguments and conclusions of the *Foundations of Natural Right,* but it also castigated the author as a Jacobin and a threat to social stability. Though the review was unsigned, Fichte was convinced (probably correctly) that the author was none other than Gottlob Ernst Schulze, the author of *Aenesidemus.* Fichte and Schulze had been schoolmates at Pforta, but had since written highly critical reviews of each other's writings: Schulze violently attacked Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation,* and of course, Fichte's review of *Aenesidemus* was meant to refute Schulze's "Humean" position.[5] Nevertheless, Fichte prided himself upon what he considered to be the restraint of his review of *Aenesidemus* and upon his refusal to be drawn into a petty public quarrel with its author. Thus he was genuinely surprised by the vindictive personal hostility displayed in the review of his *Foundations of Natural Right.* An additional aim of the published "Annals of Philosophical Tone" was, accordingly, to settle accounts with

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1796 issue of the *Deutsche Monatsschrift,* an article provocatively entitled "Kantian First Principles: A Literary Fashion" ("Kantische Grundsätze: Eine literarischer Modeartikel"). It is Sommer's review that is the object of Fichte's sarcasm in a long footnote near the end of this article.

[4]Contemporary reactions to Fichte's "Annals" appear to have been uniformly negative, and, ironically enough, it was above all the outrageous *tone* of Fichte's own article which caused the most offense. Fichte himself may well have come to regret having published this particular piece, which is perhaps one reason why he discontinued the projected series after the initial installment. In any case, he rarely referred to it in his letters, and then only to explain—and to offer faint apologies for—his own harsh tone (see, for example, his letters to Reinhold, March 21 and July 4, 1797; translated below, Section X, nos. 22 and 23).

[5]Concerning Schulze and his earlier public controversies with Fichte, see the editor's preface to Section I, above.

Schulze (though the article never mentions the latter by name). What most infuriated Fichte about the methods of this and other "anonymous" critics was the dishonest way in which they tried to dismiss his views without discussing them; it was precisely the pretension of such a "tone" that Fichte meant to expose in this first contribution to his "Annals of Philosophical Tone."

It is useful for contemporary readers to appreciate the lively and acrimonious style of public debate which characterized the "golden age" of German philosophy,[6] just as it is valuable for students of Fichte to be aware of the historical context within which his philosophy was developed and presented. But the primary value of the "Annals of Philosophical Tone" does not lie in its polemics; instead, it remains important for the brief account it gives of the deductive strategy of the *Foundations of Natural Right* and, more significant still, for the light it sheds on Fichte's understanding of the task of transcendental idealism.

One of the specific criticisms to which Fichte addresses himself in this article is the charge that he attempts the patently absurd enterprise of trying to provide a priori deductions of such "facts" of experience as the existence of light and air. Without directly denying this charge, Fichte proceeds to show how it arises from a series of fundamental misconceptions about the character of a "deduction," the task of philosophy, and the relation of experience to consciousness.

After a brief summary of the truly original deduction of intersubjectivity in the *Foundations of Natural Right* (an argument that establishes the existence of other persons as a condition necessary for the possibility of self-consciousness), Fichte turns to a discussion of the general nature of philosophical deduction. As simply as possible he attempts to "come forward and explain the reason why I consider it philosophy's task to provide a derivation of *experience in its entirety* as the necessary condition for self-consciousness."[7] To "deduce" or "establish" anything philosophically does not mean to produce its reality from some metaphysical hat, but rather to produce logical arguments which demonstrate that the item in question is among the conditions necessary for the possibility of

[6]Fichte was by no means the only contemporary observer of the philosophical scene to be aware of the importance of style and tone in philosophical debate (a topic that, after all, is closely related to the frequently discussed problem of the relationship between the "form" and the "content" of science). Indeed, only a year before the appearance of Fichte's "Annals," i.e., in May 1796, Kant himself had published an article in the *Berliner Monatsschrift*, "On a Superior Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy" ("Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie"). See the Prussian Academy edition of *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. VIII (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1923), pp. 389–406. In fact, it is difficult to resist the conjecture that it was this article of Kant's—in combination, perhaps, with Sommer's previously mentioned public criticism of "the tone of superiority" adopted by Fichte himself—which inspired Fichte to launch his own "Annals of Philosophical Tone."

[7]*SW*, II: 472.

self-consciousness. This is the sense in which the *Wissenschaftslehre* provides a deduction of all experience. But this is precisely the project the Göttingen reviewer—along with many others—found so absurd as to require no refutation.

In a miniature philosophical dialogue Fichte attempts to turn the tables on his critics by demonstrating the absurdity of the very assumptions from which their criticisms of the *Wissenschaftslehre* proceed. Whether dogmatic materialists or orthodox Kantians, the critics are shown to share a common and unexamined misconception about the relation of being to knowing and the distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge. For Fichte, the chief lesson of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is precisely the untenability of such rigid dichotomies. That the orthodox Kantians of his day continued to cling to old dualisms was, for Fichte, simply evidence of how far they were from appreciating the true spirit of the Critical Philosophy. But once these dichotomies have been rejected, then the sort of criticism of Fichte's procedure exemplified by the Göttigen reviewer's condescention toward "a priori" deductions of "a posteriori" facts is quite unfounded. This point is fundamental to the *Wissenschaftslehre,* but in none of his more technical works did Fichte ever succeed in explaining it with the clarity he achieved in this primarily polemical article.

The text of the "Annalen des philosophischen Tons" on which this translation is based and to which the volume and page numbers in the margins refer is *SW,* II: 459–89. This text has also been checked against the version in *AA* I, 4: 293–321, which unlike the former, indicates the slight differences between the first and second printings of the original essay. Unless otherwise indicated, the translation follows the first printing (which is the text followed by *SW* as well). Approximately one-half of the article is translated in this volume. Omissions are indicated in the text, and omitted passages are summarized in the notes.

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Annals of Philosophical Tone [Excerpt]

First Installment

Examination of a Review Written in a Plaintive Tone

It is to be hoped that our celebrated "philosophical age" is now drawing to a close.[1] Thus it is time to begin collecting scraps for the use of those who will later examine the history of this era.

In comparison with such a far-reaching task, the purpose of this article is modest: we merely want to compile some record of *the tone* adopted by contemporary philosophers. As trifling and casual as this task may appear, its object may, nevertheless, not seem entirely unworthy to future, more favored generations.

In its essentials, the tone which we are going to describe is not limited to philosophy, but spreads out from there to include all the other sci-
II,460 ences. Nevertheless, we will be considering only philosophical treatises, and we are convinced that, despite this limitation, we will not want for material.

The best way to understand the nature of anything is to understand the reasons for it. Following this rule, we will adduce the principles and received maxims which underlie the dominant tone in philosophy. This is a subject which has received no attention whatsoever in our age.

[1]The subheading reads, "Probe einer Recension in wehmüthigem Tone." Though "melancholy" could also be used to render *wehmütigem*, this would fail to catch the contrast, which Fichte introduces later in this essay, between reviews of philosophical literature written in a tone of mocking superiority and those written in a meekly carping (*wehmütig*) tone of false modesty and lamentation. Perhaps "whining tone" comes closest to what Fichte has in mind.

To begin with, our age is characterized by a most peculiar concept of *how to prove something.*

There now exists a literary aristocracy. One becomes a member of this elite by receiving favorable reviews, by occupying a post in a prestigious institution (assuming that one has done nothing whatsoever to earn such a position), or simply by having continued to publish over a long period of time. If one sits on the editorial board of a famous review or journal, then one belongs to the topmost ranks of this literary aristocracy. Anything which a member of this elite says is true, and it is true because he says it. At most, one is permitted to utter a word against such a famous person only if one does so submissively and while bowing deeply. The scholarly establishment is in this no different from the political one. Just as the aristocrat's dollar is worth more than the common man's, and if the former lacks the cash, his mere word of honor will do equally well, so too does the same reason take on a completely different aspect when it is employed by a famous man and when someone who is not famous tries to employ it. And when a famous man gives his word of honor that he has his reasons, then everyone cheerfully relieves him from the boring task of actually producing them.

Such aristocrats manifest their highest and most magical powers in the pages of famous reviews. As soon as anything—even if it is the work of some totally unknown beginner who is merely filling in for someone better—appears in these pages, it assumes the aura which surrounds the entire production. It is linked with the pages which precede and follow it, which communicate to it their own scholarly profundity, as well as anything else which it lacks. The author himself is amazed when he reads his own article: *miraturque novas frondes, et non sua poma.*[2] He is
II,461 transformed. From this moment on he feels that he has all the talent necessary in order to hand down final verdicts on authors to whom he looked up with diffidence only a short time ago. Though he himself was previously a poor author, from this moment on he makes it his axiom that only poor authors ever rebel against reviews, whereas good ones acquiesce in them humbly.

An argument which is especially popular in the philosophical world, and which is presented with the utmost gravity, is the following: "If what the author we are reviewing says is right, then it follows that we are wrong. But, of course, we are right. This shows you how impertinent this author is." Normally such reviewers make even shorter work of this.

They simply indict him in the following manner: "Just listen to this for a minute! On page such and such this author plainly says that he has given an a priori deduction of air and light! His students even deduce their own bowels a priori—which is even more incredible than air and

[2]"And he marvels at its strange leaves and at fruit not his own" (Virgil, *Georgics* II.82).

light. It says it right here; read it for yourselves. We have caught him in the act! The poor fellow is irretrievably lost."

The most popular way of thinking within philosophy is this one: "One ought not to treat this issue in such a precise way. One ought not to insist upon such rigorous proofs. Depending on what one needs, various conclusions may be drawn from the same two premises. It would offend against all morality and integrity to claim unabashedly that from these two premises only one conclusion can follow. This would constitute the most reprehensible despotism in the realm of opinions. It would be enormously presumptious. Such a claim is obviously plain nonsense. If it were true, who would wish to continue to be a philosopher or scholar? Any means are permissible against anyone so dangerous to the scientific republic. We must twist and falsify his words; we must invent and spread lies about him in order to denounce him on religious and political grounds. We must sick the clergy on him and arm the secular powers against him."

II,462 Finally, and most recently, the following principle has been adopted in the philosophical literature, namely, that the words "*I don't understand this*" mean much more than simply, "I don't understand this." In order to draw from this assertion the conclusion which the person who makes it wishes us to draw, we have to understand that it is based upon the following premise: "I am reason personified; I can certainly understand anything that is reasonable." Thus the only thing which remains to be desired is that no one except generally recognized members of the scientific republic's aristocracy should be allowed to make use of this type of argument.

Our age has adopted some *customs* which will seem extraordinary to future generations. It is, for example, considered to be entirely proper for an anonymous reviewer to insult an author by name, nor is it absolutely forbidden for the author so named to repay his anonymous reviewer in kind—though this does tend to annoy and anger people. It is considered honorable for an author who is identified by name maliciously to attack another author, slandering and denouncing him, until every bookstore clerk knows who is being attacked—just so long as the author does not identify by name the victim of his slander. The author who proceeds in this manner thereby earns a reputation as a fine, sly rascal. But if one unanonymous author adduces reasons to prove that another author, whom he identifies by name, is an incompetent bungler, this is thought to be a crime which demands vengeance. The entire scientific republic must unite for the purposes of punishing such a criminal.

Our age also has its own peculiar *concepts of honor and disgrace,* which diverge completely from the concepts held by all previous ages. If someone sets a lofty goal for himself, we consider this to be a crime sufficient in itself to deprive him of his honor and good name. "He wants to raise

philosophy to the rank of a self-evident science and would like to be the Euclid of this science; he said so himself,"* reports one person. "Oh no," replies another, more good-natured person, "the man must have en-
II,463 emies who have falsely imputed this statement to him. I don't believe he said that." To this the first responds, "See for yourself. Here it is in black and white." Thus the second concludes, "Yes, it really does say that. I can scarcely believe my eyes. How shameless! How horrible! I withdraw my support from him."

When one draws an obvious conclusion from two premises, one is not permitted, in today's philosophical world, to say, "this follows." Instead, one must say, "this appears to me to follow, if the other gentlemen will permit it to follow." It is considered a total breach of good manners, a sign of presumption, for one to rely upon the strength of one's arguments. One has to request permission to be right. One has to earn this permission through politeness and humility. And until the majority has granted you this permission, you can never be right.

[. . .]

Before we can take another step, we have to declare the maxims upon which our own tone is based. The author of this essay has observed these maxims for a long time and expects anyone who wishes to contribute to these "Annals" to do the same. (Incidentally, all philosophical authors are invited to contribute to this series.)

In all literature, especially in philosophical literature, the only things which we find worthy of respect are *reasons*. We are so convinced that this opinion is correct that we think it is completely foolish to respect anything else. We do not take any heed of persons: we ask only *what* was said, not *who* said it. The prevalent view of fame seems laughable to us. All that a man's previous achievements can do is attract our attention and invite us to examine that much more carefully whatever he has most recently said. But a man's fame certainly cannot induce us to accept what he says without examination. For no one is famous until he is dead and
II,464 his accounts have been closed. So long as he is alive, who can say that he may not yet propose something absurd.

*[Note added to the second printing.] Even supposing that he himself never said the latter.[3]

[3]On the other hand, Fichte never concealed his ambition to erect a truly scientific and exact system of philosophy (see, for example, the first preface and Section I of *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*). In private correspondence he was even less inhibited in his claims concerning his new system. See, for example, the passage in his letter of February 4, 1794, to K. A. Böttiger, in which he refers to the project upon which he is working as "a scientific philosophy that could even measure itself against mathematics." See too his remark in his letter to J. F. Flatt, November–December 1793 (translated in full below, Section X, no. 5): "I have been forced to construct a new system. I am convinced that philosophy can become a science only if it is generated from one single first principle, but that it must then become just as self-evident as geometry."

Since reasons are the only things that we respect, we are firmly resolved to say freely anything for which we can give reasons, and we are resolved to be restrained by nothing except indemonstrability. Thus, for example, it seems to us that it is impossible to prove that someone is spreading errors even though he knows better, or does so because he hates truth and is a malicious sophist.[4] We will, therefore, never allow ourselves to make such accusations. On the other hand, it seems to us that the meaning of words like "ignorance," "superficiality," "incompetence," "unreasonableness," and "folly" as they are customarily employed is plain enough. And if this were not so, then one could still explain the concepts upon which these words are based. Such concepts can be based on reasons, and where this can be done, we will not hesitate to employ the appropriate word. We see nothing which should be allowed to hinder us from calling a spade a spade.

It is by no means our intention to indulge prejudices—no matter how fashionable, old, or widespread they may be. If something cannot coexist with reason (to the extent that we are able to give a thorough presentation of reason's dictates), then it should not continue to exist; it ought to collapse. Therefore, anyone who wants to say something against us will have to attack our reasons directly. We find laughable all indirect refutations based upon the consequences of what we say. Who granted you your premises? It is indeed our intention to see to it that no soap bubble is left unpopped within your fortress.

It is our firm opinion that only one conclusion can be deduced from any two premises, and we intend to stand firmly by this principle. We will set to work rigorously and precisely. Our faulty inferences will be no more than faulty inferences, and we do not wish for anyone to gloss over them out of charity. But we intend to judge others by the same laws by which we wish to be judged.

[. . .]

II,465 Now to our topic itself.

In order to characterize the philosophical tone of a particular age, nothing is more convenient than reviews of philosophical writings. In part this is because of their brevity, and in part it is because the anonymity of reviews makes their authors feel more free and less likely to suppress their own nature. Not counting the few thorough reviews, which are nowadays extremely rare, reviews of philosophical writings may be divided into two classes. In the first case, the author conceals his own superficiality by forced audacity, a lofty indifference, or a smile

[4]The editors of *AA* suggest that this is an allusion to an accusation made by Schelling in an anonymous review article ("Allgemeine Uebersicht der neusten philosophischen Literatur") that appeared in the same issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* as Fichte's "Annals."

which is supposed to be superior and mocking. In reviews of the second sort, one can see the reviewer's qualms and can tell that he is secretly conscious that he is speaking about matters which he does not understand. One can tell this from his groping, unsure steps, from his uncertain wandering, and from his meek tone. Especially in reviews of this second type, it is customary for the hard-pressed reviewer to appeal for help from his good friends, and even from the public authorities. Reviews of the first type are published in famous journals; those of the latter type appear in ones that are not so famous. Those of the first type may be called "reviews written in a tone of superiority"; those of the second type may be called "reviews written in a plaintive tone."

In the next issue we will publish an examination of a review of the first sort (one published in a famous journal, which for some time now has been publishing the articles of a very superior man).[5] Here we wish to report on a "plaintive" one, published under the auspices of the Göttingen Royal Society of the Sciences.

The review in question is printed in the 194th issue of the Göttingen *Gelehrten Anzeigen* (1796) and deals with Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right according to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*.[6]

[. . .]

II,471 I did not [in the *Foundations of Natural Right*] simply presuppose, as is usually done, that every man recognizes other men outside of himself and assumes himself to stand in a relationship of mutual influence with

[5]The second printing promised that the sequel would appear "in one of the next issues." However, Fichte published no further contributions to this series. But see above, editor's preface, note 1.

[6]In the omitted section Fichte begins a detailed consideration of the criticisms advanced against his *Foundations of Natural Right* by the "anonymous Göttingen reviewer" (G. E. Schulze) and undertakes a detailed rebuttal of several specific charges brought against this book by this reviewer. He begins by reasserting his conviction that the concept of right is not dependent on morality. Unlike ethics, which is concerned with what men *should* do, the philosophy of right is concerned with how individual freedom must (logically) be limited by the freedom of others. For "the concept of right is nothing other than the concept of the *possibility of the coexistence of the freedom of several rational-sensual beings*" (*SW*, II: 466). Though the reviewer does not deny the independence of ethics and the philosophy of right, he nevertheless claims (against Fichte) that the concept of right *can* be deduced from that of morality. Fichte insists that the two concepts either are independent of each other or else are not independent of each other and chides his reviewer for the superficial relativism he (like many others) seems to display on this issue. "Reason *in several different individuals* who are judging *one and the same case* cannot contradict itself" (*SW*, II: 469). Men who differ among themselves may all be wrong, but they cannot all be right: "Anyone who makes an objective claim postulates that all reason, in accordance with a law of reason, must agree with that claim. And thus the contradictory claim is not only uncalled for, it is forbidden by conscience" (*SW*, II: 470). Consequently, when contradiction arises, it is our duty to apply reason to the situation in order to discover who is in error. With this, Fichte returns to his primary thesis, namely, that the concept of "right" is one that only makes sense in the context of a *community* of free subjects.

other men, a relationship mediated by light, air, and crude matter. In-
II,472 stead, I proved that it is necessary to assume all of these things as conditions for the possibility of self-consciousness. For reasons which at that point I had already stated, I consider such a proof to be the task of philosophy. I provisionally remarked that it must also be possible to demonstrate in the same manner the necessity of every particular natural object and class of objects, namely, by proving that they are necessary for the possibility of self-consciousness. I then requested anyone unable to comprehend this to remember that all that follows from his failure is simply that he does not comprehend this. (The reviewer calls this a *modest* thought. Does he think it requires so very much modesty to think that it is possible that one does not understand what one has not learned?)

The reviewer presents his account of what I said in a manner which suggests that its absurdity is sufficiently apparent from the mere, unadorned account, and thus that no further evidence against what I said is required.

I have encountered a similar objection to these claims in other reviews, and I have overheard it from every side in lectures and conversations. I must, therefore, take the trouble to say a few words about this sort of objection.

I will step forward and explain the reasons why I consider it philosophy's task to provide a derivation of *experience in its entirety* as the necessary condition for self-consciousness. And (since philosophy is my field) I will also set about accomplishing this task. Anyone who does not agree with what I am going to say must either show that my reasons for defining philosophy in this way are insufficient, or, if he cannot do that, he must show that some of *my* specific deductions are incorrect. Or, if he can do neither of these things, he should just say nothing at all. But what do these persons do instead? When I tell them that I have here deduced a priori the necessity of assuming that there are other rational beings like ourselves, they reply: "Of course you have deduced a priori the necessity of assuming that there are other rational beings like ourselves. Just think of it! Ha ha ha!" I tell them that I have here given an a priori deduction
II,473 of air and light. They answer me: "Air and light a priori, just think of it! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Come on, laugh along with us! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Air and light a priori: *tarte à la crème,* ha ha ha! Air and light a priori! *Tarte à la crème,* ha ha ha! Air and light a priori! *Tarte à la crème!* Ha ha ha!"[7] et cetera ad infinitum.

Stunned, I look around me. Where did I lose my way? I thought that I

[7]See act I, scene 1, of Molière's *L'école des femmes,* where the phrase "tarte à la crème" is employed as a nonsensical contribution to a rhyming game.

had entered the republic of scholars. Have I fallen into a madhouse instead?

Dear fellow citizens of the scholarly republic, first have a good laugh, and when your senses have returned I would like to have a few words with you.

I am well aware of what you tell me I have said. Yes, I did say this; who could know this better than I! I am by no means ashamed of having done so, and I will not renounce what I have said. You don't have to hold on to me so tightly; I will stand my ground against you. Heaven help you to stand your ground against me.

Dear fellow citizens, your astonishment and the fuss you are making over this proposition show not only that you have not learned the first principles of philosophy and do not understand its most ordinary concepts, but also that you are entirely lacking in common sense as well. For you believe that you are thinking something which you simply could not be thinking. And if I cannot succeed right at this moment in making this point so clearly that any witness—and you yourself—will have to concede it, then I want to be committed to a madhouse, and you can be my great Apollo.

Air and light a priori. No, don't start to laugh again at once, but tell me what is so strange about this statement.

"Well, knowledge of air and light is a posteriori. Air and light are certainly objects of experience."

Indeed they are, but who denied this? Isn't everything a part of experience for us?

"But you just said that they were a priori!"

II,474 Indeed they are. But in another sense isn't everything a priori for us? Now you are no longer laughing. Your eyes are wide with astonishment.

"Are you saying that the same thing can be both a priori and a posteriori?"

Let me ask you instead: is there anything a priori which must not, precisely for this reason, be a posteriori? Can anything be a posteriori for any reason except that it is a priori? Now your eyes are even wider.

"Come on, be serious. Surely you are joking with us because we made fun of you first."

On the contrary, are you serious? Is this really news to you still?

"It certainly is news to us!* We thought that when you deduce something a priori you are denying entirely that it is an object of experience. That's why we had to laugh so hard."

*Naturally, the next time readers along the banks of the Leine[8] hear this, they will declare that it is something they have known for a long time.

[8]The Leine is a river that flows through Göttingen. It is here treated by Fichte as "enemy territory," presumably because of the number of hostile criticisms of Fichte which had appeared in the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen.*

So! What sort of concept must you have had about philosophy until now! What, for example, did the expression "a posteriori" mean to you?

"An object of experience."

And what did the word "experience" mean?

"Well, what is a posteriori."

I see that you cannot express yourself very well. Perhaps thinking is your strong suit then. By something a posteriori you mean something which—to the extent that it is a posteriori—is not determined by the laws of reason, but is instead received passively from outside. A table, a chair, a lecture: these all exist outside of you. They affect you, and this produces within you representations of these things. I assume you find this satisfactory? Then I will continue.

You are therefore either a resolute dogmatist or else you are a so-called Kantian.

II,475 Let me begin by considering the first possibility—with which I will be quickly finished.

You dogmatists think that everything is a posteriori and find the concept of something a priori laughable. Good for you! In thinking this way, you manage to avoid a number of inconsistencies which plague your Kantian stepbrothers. When I compare you with them, then I truly respect you. You believe that all our representations are produced by the effect which things have upon us. Plain common sense tells us that *being* and *knowing* are two different and opposite things. Knowledge aims at being. We have knowledge of being. But from mere being no knowledge follows.

Yet that thing which, according to your view of the matter, is supposed to affect us amounts to nothing but a *being*. And being always produces only being and nothing more. But you transform this being into knowledge. You haven't the slightest understanding of this transformation; it must be completely unintelligible to you—though you do not even realize this. It is as if you wished to use water to account for the origin of fire. You keep pouring the water, saying, "Don't you see how it burns?" When we shake our heads no, you yell for more water in order to make your account even clearer. But we have no doubt that there is a fire here. What we doubt is whether you have kindled it with water. You want to outsmart us, and in trying to do so you outsmart yourselves. It is as if you thought that by refining being, by making it purer and purer, as it were, it would someday finally turn into knowledge. And after all this refining, you yourselves believe that you have caught hold of knowledge. But being remains being, always and forever. You are really practical jokers: you drop the same penny into the laughing boy's hand twice, in order to make him think that he has two pennies. Naturally, he is not taken in by this. You, however, continue on your way with your penny in your pocket—firmly believing that you have two. Consequently, we are un-

II,476 able to understand what you mean by "a posteriori." You don't even understand this yourself.

The Kantians can probably provide us with a better account. Their creed (at least the creed of those Kantians who joined in the laughter over my statement) is as follows: "Everything that occurs in consciousness includes two major components. The first one is present in the mind a priori, in advance of all experience. What is a priori is not a posteriori. The other component enters the mind a posteriori through experience. What is a posteriori is not a priori. Concepts are present a priori in relation to objects. The concepts of right and causality, for example, are present prior to all experience. But the objects to which these concepts apply are met with in experience only afterward. For example, men possessing rights, or the light and air through which men enter into a relationship based upon the concept of right, or objects related to each other as cause and effect: such things are exclusively a posteriori."

I will not ask you how objects are able to produce representations in our minds. In order to explain this you would have to have recourse to the same magic trick of transforming being into knowing which the dogmatists required. But, since this is the least of your problems, I will not pursue this question. Nor will I burden you with questions about how the a priori concept and the a posteriori object always manage to fit each other so nicely. I will not ask you why there are never more objects present than the concepts are able to cover, or why some concepts do not remain empty and forsaken of any objects—ashamed in the presence of the other concepts. Nor will I ask you why it never happens that, since there is no means for uniting them, matter doesn't outgrow the concepts—just as Sir Hudibras' rump, for want of a crupper, outgrew his own head.[9]

All in the world that I want to do is to allow you to explain your own words. What do you mean when you say, "The concepts are there a priori"?

"Er, well, I mean that they are present in the mind in advance of any experience."

II,477 Good. But doesn't that in which something else is present have to be present itself as well?

"Yes indeed."

Therefore, a mind exists in advance of all experience. At this point you become quiet. I will continue with my argument. Whatever exists is in space.[10] (You cannot think of it in any other way, and besides, this

[9]See Samuel Butler's satirical poem *Hudibras*, a German translation of which appeared in 1765. The specific passage to which Fichte's text alludes is Part I, canto 1, lines 285–92.

[10]"Was da ist, ist nothwendig im Raume." I.e., "Whatever is there, is necessarily in space."

constitutes one of the cardinal principles of your philosophy.) Anything that exists in space is something material. Therefore, in advance of all experience, there exists a material mind. Is this mind made of wood? Stone? Leather? This wooden (or stone, or leather) mind contains concepts a priori. What sort of things are these concepts? Are they perhaps holes through which the things in themselves rush in, thereby assuming the form and shape of the holes, in the same way that the waffle batter is formed by the waffle iron?

"No. One really must not think any further about such questions. One must not use the categories to determine what the categories are like."

Oh, are you able to stop reflecting at any point you choose? We others are unable to do so. But I see what you mean; you don't think we should think so precisely about such things as the nature of the mind or the categories. Instead, we should think of them only in a very *general* manner—*wholesale,* as it were.

Thus you think that experience furnishes you with finished objects: with air and light, with causally related objects—and all in a fully finished, completely determined state. Let us dwell awhile on the last example. You are conscious of objects which stand in a causal relationship to each other. This consciousness has been produced a posteriori. The objects themselves are so constituted that the one contains the basis for the specific, existent form of the other. You know this a posteriori; this is the way in which they are presented to you. But look again at what you actually know in this case.

II,478 "That one object contains the basis for the being of another."

But this is an embodiment of the concept of causality. Thus you possess this concept a posteriori. Why are you so greedy, why do you want the same thing to be provided a priori as well?

But you will stick to your original claim: we are provided with concepts a priori—the concept of causality, for example. Now what does this concept mean?

"That one thing contains the basis for the *being* of another."

How's that: *One thing? Another thing?* What is this "one thing," and what is this "other thing"? Well, if I understand you correctly, they are both objects. Therefore, without these objects you couldn't possess this concept at all. But if this *concept* is presented to you a priori, then the objects must be presented a priori along with it, and thus you would not have had to go begging for them a posteriori. This is what happens to you: to the extent that you wish to cling to what is a priori, you lose what is a posteriori; to the extent that you grasp for the latter, the former eludes you.

Simply admit it: you do not understand a single word of all that stuff you've been trying to palm off on the poor public for the past ten years. If you had only known this! But you didn't even notice your own lack of

understanding, because you have no talent for thinking clearly and distinctly, and because you haven't the slightest idea what *understanding* really means.

You call yourselves "Kantian" philosophers, but you haven't even learned the meaning of the basic concepts of this philosophy—the meaning of the concepts "a priori" and "a posteriori."

Seeing as how you do not know everything which you ought to know, you should at least permit someone who does to explain it to you without your sulking.

Man receives nothing from without. He is an intellect, and thus, by his very nature, he exists "for himself" (his being is a kind of knowing).

However, and in accordance with the laws of his own nature, man cannot exist for himself, unless a specific system of other things also exists for him. This system is the system of experience in its entirety, and if man exists, then this system necessarily does too. (Continuous experience is nothing but the continued analysis of that system which has its foundation in man's nature.)

As soon as man exists, he discovers his own nature; but as soon as he discovers his own nature, he discovers the nature of this system of experience. Prior to experience there is no mind or anything in the mind. If you look only at this act of discovery, then everything that can possibly exist for you—including you yourself—
II,479 *exists only within experience (a posteriori). If you look only at the fact that everything you discover has its necessary foundation in your own nature, then the same thing is a priori.*

So go in peace, and next time try not to laugh so impertinently. I will be sincerely happy if you should ever understand this.[11]

[. . .]

II,487 I have two final comments: one addressed to the reviewer and one addressed to the public.

As for the reviewer, I have adequately displayed his superficiality and ignorance, as well as his malice, and I make no bones about calling what I

[11]The omitted sections (which amount to some eight pages) are devoted to a detailed enumeration of specific distortions and falsifications in the review, as well as to increasingly heated polemics directed against the Göttingen reviewer, who is berated for his ignorance and lack of philosophical acumen, as well as for his transparent attempts to alert the political authorities to allegedly incendiary passages in the *Foundations of Natural Right*. In response to the reviewer's attempt to relate Fichte's system to those of Reinhold and Schmid, Fichte once again inveighs against the orthodox "Kantians" and their fundamentally incoherent doctrine of an "externally given" content of knowledge. The omitted section of the text ends with a burlesque version of the review. In addition, Fichte claims that this particular review is only part of a widespread conspiracy of philosophical incompetents against the *Wissenschaftslehre*. These conspiring critics are, in turn, berated for refusing to engage in rational argument and preferring to resort to maliciously inspired ridicule of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In passing, Fichte also pauses to take note of several other hostile reviews of his writings and to repay his critics in kind—and with interest. Friedrich Nicolai's opinions, for example, are dismissed as "infinitely boring," and a long and extraordinarily abusive footnote is devoted to J. C. Sommer, the author of an essay critical of Fichte, whom Fichte addresses throughout as "Mother Goose" (*SW*, II: 480–82n.).

have demonstrated by its proper name. What *will* the reviewer do about this? Will he take comfort in his anonymity? Will he anonymously assert that he despises this tactless and crude attack? When the opportunity arises, will he maliciously attempt to avenge himself and to arouse others against me? Dear Sir, that is no revenge. For I can defend myself again and again, and the results will be similar—or even worse. I want to tell you myself what *you should* do.

I will certainly not claim to have treated *you* gently on this occasion. Here, as on many other occasions, I have spoken derisively of the Kantians' rubbish—and *you* yourself are a Kantian in some respects, as *you* boast on occasion. They responded with distortions, ranting, and slander, that is, by behaving toward me in the same way that *you* have behaved and will continue to behave. But not one of them has yet dared to argue with me. To be sure, prior to the appearance of my system I used to receive anonymous letters from Leipzig and elsewhere announcing that *my system* had been refuted. But since its appearance, there has been only silence from these quarters. So do what no one else has done. In addition, the public elsewhere does not have a very high opinion of
II,488 the state of metaphysics in your region, so you can overturn this prejudice at the same time. Come on, utterly refute my system. Show that it is nothing at all. Pull it up at the root. Then this insolent braggart will suddenly lie exposed before you, and your revenge will be as complete as can be.

You reply that my spiderweb doesn't deserve even that much respect and that any fly is strong enough to tear it apart. All the better, dear Sir, for then it will take less of your time and effort. But do it anyway. Do it for the sake of the common good. Do it because I have mocked you so outrageously. If I thought it would provoke a response from you, I would run through the Kantians' entire "table of the categories" yet again in order to taunt you. So come forward, mighty knight, but I beg you to approach with a raised visor.

I now turn to the public.

Some of you may find the tone which I have assumed in this essay to be not only novel but objectionable. I must remark that here too I have relied upon my *either-or*. I have already explained the maxims which I believe justify my tone. So *either* furnish me with *reasons* which show the injustice and inappropriateness of these maxims *or* else remain silent.

In the literary world there are, in my opinion, no weapons other than arguments. Whoever loses with these weapons becomes dependent upon the discretion of the victor. But the victor should be humane and generous. Dear public, I could adduce evidence on my own behalf which would surely convince you that my tone is appropriate. No one talks more about *humanity* than those who have no desire to be *just*. The people who demand humanity most insistently are precisely the ones

who have none at all. And the very people who first offend others mercilessly are overcome with annoyance when anyone directs the faintest harsh word in their direction. On account of the manner in which I have been treated for years, I might well believe myself to be absolved from any duty to be merciful. Of the people that I have known for a
II,489 while, how many have not, before long, begun to behave in the most shameful manner toward me? How many people have treated me in this manner without a single bitter word from me—people to whom, on account of their other merits, I have continued to accord great public respect? Why, O public, have you chosen to make me an example of your injustice? In a matter in which it is hardly permissible not to force them to open their eyes, will you not permit me to utter a single word against these people whom you permit to sick the clergy on me, to incite the public authorities against me, and to speak of my writings as those of a public fool who ought to be locked up? But I will not plead my own case in this manner, precisely because this was not the decisive factor which moved me to take the steps that I have taken. What provoked me to do so was the fact that this is the only way to open the ears of the German public, the only way to penetrate your stopped-up ears and to shock them at least.

If you only realized how shamelessly you have been mocked until now; if you only knew what nonsense you have been sold in exchange for your cash—nonsense called "Kantian philosophy," as well as many other kinds of nonsense of all sorts; and if you only realized the means that have been employed to prevent anyone else from striking a light for you: then you would undoubtedly find my tone to be very mild. The bunglers in philosophy and belles lettres have joined together against the few who are better. (Reason proceeds more peacefully in its other fields, because these have not yet proven to be equally lucrative fields for speculation designed to open the purse of the larger reading public.) But in philosophy and belles lettres these bunglers are furiously determined not to let their prey slip from their grasp, and their prey is you, the German public. They base their confidence upon the comforting maxim *Fier-en-fat: nous sommes dix contre un.*[12] This is the literary history of our age in a nutshell. These days will pass, however, and the cause of reason will triumph, as it has always triumphed, and then one will find that many things which now appear to be unpardonable are very pardonable indeed.

[12]"We have them outnumbered ten to one." Fier-en-fat, whose personal motto is "soyons hardis, nous sommes dix contre un!" is a character in Voltaire's "Prodigal Son." This very passage from Voltaire is cited by Jacobi in his Wieder Mendelssohns Beschuldigungen in dessen Schreiben an die Freunde Lessings (*Werke*, IV,2: 253), which is undoubtedly the source of the present allusion.

X

Selected Correspondence, 1790–1799

Editor's Preface

Fichte's career at Jena coincided with one of the most exciting periods in modern European history. European society was transformed by the events initiated by the French Revolution, and this social transformation coincided with an intellectual revolution that transformed German literature and philosophy. It was also a great age for writing letters. An enormous number of letters to and from Fichte have survived and provide the contemporary reader with a truly fascinating view of the way in which the intellectual, political, and social revolutions of the age were perceived and mirrored in a provincial university town in central Europe. At the same time, they also document—often in quite a poignant manner—the personal and professional crises that marked Fichte's career.

Fichte's letters are essential documents for anyone interested in his life and personality, just as they are valuable sources for those with a broader interest in late eighteenth-century European intellectual history. But Fichte's letters are of special interest to students of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Kant, Goethe, Schiller, Reinhold, Jacobi, and Maimon were among his correspondents, as were a number of other, less well-known philosophers and critics of the period. All of the letters translated in this volume have been chosen for their *philosophical* interest. In these letters one can observe Fichte as he tries to explain and to defend his new system of transcendental philosophy. Some of the letters bear primarily on the genesis of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* whereas others are more interesting for the light they shed on Fichte's more mature understanding of his own philosophical standpoint. Some of the letters are concerned with specific details of the system, while others attempt to provide a general overview of the same. In fact, some of the following letters (above all, those addressed to K. L. Reinhold) represent miniature treatises on the *Wissen-*

schaftslehre and can still serve as excellent introductions to the study of Fichte's philosophy.

These texts have been included in this volume in the hope that they will be of value to contemporary readers struggling to make sense of Fichte's more formal presentations of his system. They have also been included because they provide us with an unparalleled glimpse of the man behind the philosophy: a philosopher who believed that "the kind of philosophy one chooses depends upon the kind of person one is."

The following translations from Fichte's correspondence are based on the two-volume edition of Fichte's *Briefwechsel* (*B*) edited by Hans Schulze (Leipzig: Haessel, 1930). However, these texts have been compared with (and occasionally emended with reference to) the texts of the same letters contained in volumes 1–3 of Part III of *AA*. Letters are identified by date, recipient, and number. Each letter or draft has been translated in its entirety.

Selected Correspondence

1. Fragment of a Letter to Weisshuhn, August–September 1790

. . . I have been living in a new world ever since reading the *Critique of Practical Reason.* Propositions which I thought could never be overturned have been overturned for me. Things have been proven to me which I thought could never be proven—for example, the concept of absolute freedom, the concept of duty, etc.—and I feel all the happier for it. It is unbelievable how much respect for mankind and how much strength this system gives us! But why am I saying this to you! You will have long since felt this, just as I do now. What a blessing for an age in which morality has been destroyed from its very foundations and from whose dictionaries the word *duty* has been erased! Please forgive me for saying so, but I cannot convince myself that prior to the Kantian critique anyone able to think for himself thought any differently than I did, and I do not recall ever having met anyone who had any fundamental objections to make against my [previous] system. I encountered plenty of sincere persons who had different—not *thoughts* (for they were not at all capable of thinking)—but different *feelings.* Thus I was deceived by the apparent consistency of my previous system,[1] and thus are thousands of persons perhaps still deceived.

Have you read Kant's *Critique of Judgment* yet? It consists of an aesthetics and a teleology. You will be doubly interested in the former, since you are occupied with the investigation of beauty. Like everything of Kant's, the book is convincing, and it seems to me to be clearer and better written than his previous works—as well as better printed! Have you read his critique of Eberhard, "On a Discovery According to Which Any New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier

One"?[2] This article throws a lot of light on the *Critique of Pure Reason* and even more upon Eberhard's distortions and underhanded expressions. Furthermore, it is written here and there with more wit than one would have expected from Kant. Kant is now even promising a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of ethics.

I have now thrown myself completely into the Kantian philosophy—at first out of necessity (I gave lessons on the *Critique of Pure Reason*), but then (ever since I became acquainted with the *Critique of Practical Reason*) with genuine enthusiasm. A certain Peuker in Silesia has written an exposition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,*[3] which includes a short refutation of objections which have been brought against it. For the most part it is a summary, which, nevertheless, seems to me to be first rate. But at bottom I am not pleased with it, since I half intended to do something of the same sort myself. It seems to me that a major reason for the incomprehensibility of the *Critique* lies in the frequent number of repetitions and digressions which interrupt the train of thought, and I think the book would be easier if it were only half so thick. . . .

B no. 55; *AA*, III, no. 63. Friedrich August Weisshuhn (1758–95) was the son of a country pastor. He and Fichte were schoolmates at Pforta from 1774 to 1780, and subsequently attended university together at Leipzig from 1781 to 1784. Weisshuhn was perhaps the closest friend of Fichte's youth, as well as his most valued philosophical correspondent. Weisshuhn suffered from poor health and was an invalid for the last years of his life. In 1795, at Fichte's invitation, he moved to Jena, where he lived in Fichte's home and where he died a few months after his arrival. This letter was written shortly after Fichte had returned to Leipzig from his first stay in Zurich. Both the opening and the closing section of this letter are missing.

1. Prior to his discovery of Kant's writings, Fichte was committed to a "system" of metaphysical determinism. See the editor's introduction for information concerning this "previous system."

2. J. A. Eberhard (1739–1809) was a professor of philosophy at Halle. Kant's scathing critique of Eberhard, *Ueber eine Entdeckung nach der alle neue Critik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll,* was published in 1790. In English, see Henry E. Allison's translation of Kant's essay, which includes an informative introduction by the translator: *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

3. J. G. Peuker, *Darstellung des Kantischen Systems nach seinen Hauptmomenten zufolge der Vernunftcritik und Beantwortung der dagegen gemachten Einwürfe* (1790).

2. Draft of a Letter to Achelis, November 1790

So at least one result of my stay in Zurich—the real influence of which upon my welfare I cannot yet appreciate—is that I will retain your friendship. I thank you from my heart for your kind letter, which assures me of this in such a convincing manner.

Your account of your trip through Italian Switzerland and of the incident with Dr. Beyr on the Gotthard Pass made me feel as if I were

there as I read it. I would have feared something like that from Dr. Beyr, and unless I am mistaken, I mentioned in Zurich that I wished you had another traveling companion. We always knew that he was a physical weakling, and of course physical weakness always has a moral influence. What should we do with such persons? Only a physician could improve them (if physicians could replace weak nerves with strong ones). Naturally, all that we can give such persons is our pity on account of a situation which makes them a burden to themselves and to others. You know how he acted before my departure, how he left on a trip without saying good-bye to me and has not shown his face there since. I can also tell you that he did not reply to a letter which I wrote him right after my arrival in Leipzig and that he treated Baron Walldorf (whose best friend he claimed to be in Zurich) the same way. This is just his way of separating himself from his friends. Such a manner is admittedly not refined, but since he treats everyone in the same way, no one has any particular right to be offended by it. I am consigning him to that same oblivion to which I have already consigned many common people.

You have gained two things from this incident: on the one hand, you have had a chance to show your courage and to harden your strength through the successful results of this exertion; on the other hand, you will have found a new joy in your awareness of your own superiority. Thus employed, all the incidents of our life have results which benefit us.

If I cared for you less, I would envy you on account of your wanderings and the diverse education that someone like you has surely thereby acquired. Still, I am a bit peeved with fate for not allowing me at least a small share in this through the pleasure of your company. Will I ever see you again in this life? If someone were to tell me that the answer is surely no, I would be quite disconsolate.

Your view of Switzerland as a brief epitome of the entire earth and of the main physical and moral differences among the earth's chief inhabitants, that is, human beings, is an original thought and one worthy of you. With that love of truth which will always be my guide, I must freely confess that I doubt whether anyone, in just one journey, could assimilate all of these characteristics and work them into a whole. But still, it is to your credit that you hit upon such an idea. Furthermore, those observations, which are more profound than your modesty allows you to admit, would provide you with many excellent things to say by way of illustrating your idea for the benefit of other intelligent persons who will follow your itinerary with more leisure. Therefore, I would strongly advise you to write something on this subject and to lay aside your excessive modesty once and for all. A person with your intelligence and correct sentiments, combined with a writing style as highly developed as yours, should make himself useful to the world. If you don't wish to write, then who will? People who cannot realize their own shortcomings,

because their souls are incapable of imagining anything better, that's who. Among the travel descriptions of Switzerland which you mention,[1] you are perhaps dazzled by Meiners on account of his reputation. He certainly rushed through the country even faster than you did. In regard to the inhabitants of Zurich, even I can tell you how incorrect his character descriptions are. You could provide something just as good as Küttner (whom I have always read with pleasure), or perhaps even better. I have not read Coxe or Storr. And—since I am on the subject—when will the public see something of your poetry, which does not deserve to be so little known? I, at least, have derived many evenings of pleasure from rereading my copies of some of your poems, and always find new enjoyment in this. I would really like to share this enjoyment with more people. Perhaps friendship plays a part in the pleasure these poems give me, but still, you know that nothing really bad would please me, and in any case I would not expect the public to read them as often as I do.

May things at home go for you just as you wish! May you find everywhere that pure pleasure for which your heart so suits you. I will share this enjoyment avidly, finding in the welfare of my friends—especially you—that joy which I myself am perhaps denied.

Not that I want to complain! The past four or five months here in Leipzig have been the happiest that I can remember in my entire life. And what I find most satisfying is that I do not owe the least part of this happiness to others. Remember how I was beginning to feel a little sick in Zurich toward the end? Either that was partly my imagination, or else the Schwerdt's cooking did not sit well with me.[2] Ever since leaving Zurich I have been the very picture of health, and I know how to appreciate this good fortune. My imagination had been unnaturally excited by my stay in Zurich and, even more, by my travels. I arrived in Leipzig with a head swarming with big plans. These soap bubbles all burst, and I am not even left with the film of which they were made. At first, this upset my peace of mind a bit, and so it was half out of despair that I did something that I should have done earlier: since I could not alter what lay outside of me, I resolved to alter what lay inside. I hurled myself into philosophy, namely, the Kantian philosophy, as goes without saying. Here I found the antidote for the true source of my trouble, and happiness enough in the bargain. The influence that this philosophy, especially its moral part (though this is unintelligible apart from a study of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), has upon one's entire way of thinking is unbelievable—as is the revolution that it has occasioned in my way of thinking in particular. I especially owe it to you to confess that I now believe wholeheartedly in human freedom and realize full well that duty, virtue, and morality are all possible only if freedom is presupposed. I realized this truth very well before—perhaps I said as much to you—but

I felt that the entire sequence of my inferences forced me to reject morality. It has, in addition, become quite obvious to me that very harmful consequences for society follow from the assumption that all human actions occur necessarily, and just as obvious that this is largely the source of the tremendous ethical corruption of the so-called better classes. If someone who accepts the principles of necessity still manages to avoid this corruption, the reason for this is by no means the harmlessness, let alone the utility, of the principle of necessity. Your uncorrupted ethical feelings guided you better than my arguments guided me, and (this much I myself am willing to grant) it is forgivable to be found lacking when it comes to argument in this case. That many more people are not found lacking in this area is due more to their great inconsistency than to their great acuity. Furthermore, I am very firmly convinced that this life is not the realm of pleasure, but rather of work and toil, and that every joy ought to do no more than fortify us for further toil. We are not required to prepare our own destiny, but merely to cultivate ourselves. I do not worry the least bit about external things; I try to be, rather than to seem. I thank these convictions for the profound peace of mind which I am enjoying. My external situation is just as it should be for such an arrangement: I am no one's master and no one's servant. I have no prospects at all, since the entire state of the church here displeases me—as do the people. So long as I am able to maintain my present [in]dependence, I shall do so at any price.

You ask whether I am contributing to any journal. No, to none. My original plan was to work on the *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaft,* but there it is anarchy. The editor's name is Weisse. He is a bookseller, and in activities of this sort I wish to have nothing to do with a bookseller. I also sent my essay on Klopstock's *Messiah* to Boye for [publication in] the *Deutsche Museum.*[3] Boye wrote back that he feared that the poet, who had honored him with his friendship for years, might take it amiss if he should have anything to do with publishing an essay which might be critical of his *Messiah.* This was all right with me for I had already regretted my sin. If I am going to become an author, then I want to do so on my own. The business of writing as a profession is not for me. It is unbelievable how much I have to work in order to finish anything which satisfies me halfway. The more I write, the harder it becomes for me. I have been working on an explantory summary of Kant's *Critique of Judgment.*[4] But if I want to publish it before being confronted with a hundred competitors, I will simply have to publish it in a half-finished state. If the child ever appears, then you shall have a copy. If I have the time and the leisure, I will devote them for the present entirely to the Kantian philosophy. It would perhaps be of benefit to the world forcefully and vividly to urge Kant's first principles of morality upon the public in a popular presentation. This is a merit which I would like to acquire for myself,

especially in order to compensate for my having spread false first principles. Furthermore, his morality does indeed lend itself to a popular presentation, but this requires leisure and independence, and will I have them?

Poor Escher![5] I have just received a letter from Zurich in which his situation is very plaintively described. I have written to him, but he is no longer able to read, and someone had to read my letter to him. I have given up expecting ever again to see a line from his hand. For this reason I wish to order a copy of his "Idyll" published in the *Helvetische Kalender.* I saw some beautiful things at his house in Sax. We lose so much when we lose him. Even his fate makes him remarkable, for it is a terrible thing to rot in a living body with so great a desire to live. If I did not believe in another world, I would tremble.

Write to me soon, describing your situation in detail. I will always allow you to read what is written within my heart, and it will always be a positive sign for me if I may be allowed to do so.

B, no. 61; *AA,* III, no. 70a. Henrich Nikolaus Achelis (1764–1831), who had studied theology at Göttingen, met Fichte in Zurich, where they were both engaged as private tutors from 1788 to 1790. The two young men became friends and enjoyed each other's company until Fichte returned to Leipzig in the spring of 1790. Achelis left Zurich in September of the same year and sent Fichte a letter from his home in Bremen. As this draft of Fichte's reply shows, Achelis's letter arrived just after Fichte's initial "discovery" of Kant.

1. The travel authors and books to which Fichte alludes in this paragraph are Christoph Meiners (1747–1810), the author of *Brief über die Schweiz* (1784–85); K. G. Küttner (1755–1805), the author of *Briefe eines Sachsen aus der Schweiz an seinen Freund in Leipzig* (1785–86); William Coxe (1747–1828), the author of *Sketches of the Natural, Civil and Political State of Swisserland* (1779); and G. C. Storr (1749–1821), the author of *Alpenreise vom Jahre 1781* (1784–86).

2. Gasthof zum Schwerdt was the name of the inn operated by Fichte's employers in Zurich, the Otts.

3. Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724–1803) was a German poet celebrated for his lyric "odes" as well as for his ambitious epic poems, especially his long *Messias.* The manuscript of Fichte's unpublished essay on Klopstock's *Messias* has not survived, but see *AA* II, 1: 244–47.

4. Though never completed or published by Fichte, see the very interesting surviving portion of the draft of his *Versuch eines erklärenden Auszugs aus Kants Kritik der Urteilskraft,* in *AA* II, 1: 325–73.

5. J. J. Escher (1765–90) was another young German whom Fichte met in Zurich, where the two were frequent companions in 1789–90.

3. Draft of a Letter to Reinhard, February 20, 1793

I would not have waited so long to convey to you my heartfelt gratitude—my gratitude for your permission for me to express my high esteem for you in the way I asked, as well as my gratitude for all the other kind remarks in your letter—if I had not felt duty-bound to be as

considerate as possible, knowing how busy you are, and not to write of things which would be of no importance to anyone but me. Yet some report is expected.

With your permission, I will begin with the last point in your letter, and will take this occasion to unburden my heart to my generous patron. I have set for myself a very great task, a task which may perhaps exceed my abilities. For this task, which I would like to complete without any notice, I require carefree leisure. I appear to have an opportunity to enjoy such leisure and, at the same time, to fufill a sacred duty. Should this task defeat me, it will at least do so against my own will. If, after a few years, I should have accomplished my task, then I would rather have any snug little position in my native land than the most prestigious one in a foreign land. My native land has always been very dear to me, and I must say sincerely that it became even dearer to me when it learned to appreciate you. And it will undoubtedly be even more estimable after it has felt your influence for a long while.

However, my path will soon pass through my native land, and I look forward impatiently to the hour when I can pay you my respects in person. I would be especially pleased to hear your objections to the Critical Philosophy, if you will honor me by sharing them with me. The doubts of someone like yourself can only be instructive and can only contribute to the improvement of science. If it is not too presumptious of me, let me say that I think it would be a substantial loss for science if you were not to make your doubts generally known. I always thought that the Kantian philosophy was an unassailable fortress (I am speaking of the spirit of that philosophy, which has been articulated neither by Kant nor by Reinhold, and which is just beginning to dawn on me). Furthermore, I have, so far at least, encountered no objections which seem to me to be based upon anything except misunderstanding—not excepting Reinhold's objections, which apply merely to the letter of Kant's philosophy. That is, I encountered no such objections until recently, when I was suddenly assailed by a doubt in the midst of a conversation with an independent thinker (whom you will allow me to identify later).[1] This doubt concerns nothing less than the first principle, and—though this is a project which, under the circumstances, I must postpone until a more suitable time—if this doubt cannot be refuted, it will destroy all philosophy and replace it with the most soulless skepticism, of a kind far more severe than the indisputably refuted Humean kind of skepticism. Yet I would still rather embrace such skepticism than a system which is untenable.

B, no. 109; *AA*, III, no. 133a. Franz Volkmar Reinhard (1753–1812) was professor of philosophy and theology at Wittenberg, where, for a brief period of time, Fichte had been a student. In 1792 Reinhard was appointed to the influential post of chaplain to the court of Saxony at Dresden. Fichte had already requested permission to dedicate the second

edition of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* to Reinhard, whose patronage Fichte, a native of Saxony, had a special interest in cultivating. This draft was written from Danzig, where Fichte was preparing the second edition of his *Critique* and working on his political writings, after having just resigned his last position as a private tutor. At the same time he was preparing to leave for Zurich, where he planned to fulfill his "sacred duty" and marry his fiancée, Johanna Rahn. As this letter indicates, he hoped to visit Reinhard during his stop in his "native land" of Saxony on the way to Switzerland.

1. According to the editors of *AA* III, 1, the "independent thinker" in question was Kant's friend Court Chaplain J. F. Schulz, in conversations with whom Fichte later claimed to have conceived the basic idea for the *Wissenschaftslehre*. See his remark on this subject in the "Second Introduction" to the *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, *SW*, I: 473 (*H/L*, p. 46).

4. To Kant, September 20, 1793

Most esteemed patron, it was with sincere pleasure that I received your letter—the proof that even from a distance you find me worthy of your benevolence. The destination of my journey was Zurich, where, even during my previous stay, a young and very worthy lady considered me worthy of her special friendship. Even prior to my trip to Königsberg, she desired for me to return to Zurich and cement the bond between us. Since I had accomplished nothing at that point, I did not consider it permissible to do what I now can: for I at least seem to have the promise of doing something in the future. Though it has been postponed until now by certain unforeseen difficulties that the laws of Zurich pose for foreigners, the marriage will take place in a few weeks. This marriage would give me the opportunity to dedicate myself to study in independent leisure—were it not that the character of the Zurichers makes me wish for a change of domicile. In itself this character is kind, but it is most incompatible with my own.

I have read your *Religion within the Limits etc.* with pleasure, and expect a similar pleasure from the publication of your *Metaphysics of Morals*. My project concerning natural law, civil law, and political theory is progressing, and I could easily devote half a lifetime to the accomplishment of this project. Thus I will always have the happy prospect of being able to make use of your work for this purpose. Until then, if I should encounter unexpected difficulties in forming my ideas, would you permit me to solicit your good advice? Perhaps even while they are struggling to develop I will lay my ideas in various forms before the public for judgment—though of course I would do so anonymously. I confess that I have already published something of this sort,[1] though at present I do not wish to be known as its author, because in it I have denounced many injustices with utter candor and zeal. For the moment I have done so without making any proposals concerning the means for remedying

these injustices without disorder, since I have not yet advanced to that point. I have seen *one* piece of enthusiastic praise for this book, but have not yet seen any thorough evaluation of it. If you will permit me this—what should I say? this confidence or familiarity?—I will send a copy for your judgment just as soon as I have received the sequel from the printer. You, esteemed sir, are the only person whose judgment and strict discretion I trust completely. In the present extraordinary confusion almost everyone—first-rate thinkers included—has unfortunately chosen sides when it comes to political matters: they have become either timid adherents of anything that is old or else ardent enemies of the same, and in both cases merely *because* it is old. Should you be so kind as to permit me to send you this book (without your permission I would not even think of doing so), I believe that Court Chaplin Schulz will be able to see that any letters will reach me.

No, great man, you who are of such importance for the human race, your work will not perish! It will bear rich fruits. It will give mankind a fresh impetus; it will bring about a total rebirth of man's first principles, opinions, and ways of thinking. Believe me, there is nothing which will be unaffected by the consequences of your work, and your discoveries have joyous prospects. I have communicated to Court Chaplin Schulz a few remarks on this subject, which I wrote during my journey, and I have asked him to share these with you.

Oh great and good man, what must it be like toward the end of one's earthly life to be able to have such feelings as you can have! I confess that the thought of your example will always be my guide and will impel me not to retire from the stage before I have been of some use to mankind, to the extent that it lies within my power to be of such use.

I commend myself to your continued benevolence, and I am, with the greatest respect and esteem,

Faithfully yours,
Fichte

B, no. 131; *AA*, III, no. 160. This letter was written from Zurich in reply to Kant's letter to Fichte of May 12, 1793, acknowledging receipt of the second edition of the *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation.* After apologizing for not having read the new edition carefully, Kant suggested that Fichte might be able to determine the relationship between their views by reading Kant's own most recently published work, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*) (1793), which deals with many of the same topics discussed in Fichte's *Critique.* Responding to Fichte's report on his work on political theory, Kant mentioned that he himself would be dealing with similar topics in a still unfinished work, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten,* which did not appear until 1797. Elsewhere in his letter, Kant expressed a friendly interest in Fichte's own work and even asked to be kept informed of its progress. Kant's letter to Fichte concluded with the following passage (the effect of which upon the recipient is only too easy to imagine): "However near or far the conclusion of my life may be, I will be able to conclude my career with satisfaction so long as I can flatter myself with the thought that what I have begun through my own modest labors will be carried nearer and nearer to completion by talented men zealously working to improve the world" (*B*, no. 120; *AA*, III, no. 146).

1. *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die französische Revolution.* The first part of Fichte's *Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution* was published anonymously in two installments. The first installment appeared in the spring of 1793, and the second installment appeared at the beginning of 1794. The promised Part II of the *Beitrag* never appeared.

5. Draft of a Letter to Flatt, November or December 1793

Despite the fact that I must put off replying to your recent, instructive letter again today and for who knows how long thereafter, I just cannot delay any longer in assuring you that I do not value lightly my good fortune in having earned a portion of your good will and perhaps of your friendship. I do not intend to make myself unworthy of this by neglecting the duties thereby imposed upon me.

I have had to spend part of the autumn dealing with various disparate projects, which has left me little time for anything else; consequently, I am only now turning to things which I admit that I should have done earlier. In replying to your letter I would not have been able to do much more than to repeat myself and at most say what you will have already read in the review of Creuzer's *Skeptical Investigations on Freedom* in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* Yet the good opinion you have of me makes me feel obliged to provide you with something more—as if I could keep step with you on the path of independent thinking! I want to repay this debt, but I hope that you will allow me to postpone doing so.

Aenesidemus,[1] which I consider to be one of the most remarkable products of our decade, has convinced me of something which I admittedly already suspected: that even after the labors of Kant and Reinhold, philosophy is still not a science. *Aenesidemus* has shaken my own system to its very foundations, and, since one cannot very well live under the open sky, I have been forced to construct a new system. I am convinced that philosophy can become a science only if it is generated from one single first principle, but that it must then become just as self-evident as geometry. Furthermore, I am convinced that there is such a first principle, though it has not yet been established *as such.* I believe that I have discovered this first principle, and I have found it to hold good, to the extent that I have advanced in my inquires so far. Before too long I hope to have advanced to the investigation of freedom, the results of which I will be pleased to submit to you for your judgment.

Such inquiries arouse, on the one hand, the liveliest amazement at the wonderful system of the human mind, in which everything always operates through the same mechanism, through the simplest linkage of separate elements into a unity which, in turn, affects each of the individual

elements; that is, such inquiries arouse amazement at the noble simplicity of the most complex works. On the other hand, these inquiries also inspire veneration for Kant, that remarkable and unique man whom our age produced after the elapse of centuries. Though I am convinced that Kant has not expounded this system of the human mind, he does have it in his possession, and it would be a challenge to discover whether or not Kant is clearly conscious of possessing this system. Perhaps he has a genius that speaks the truth to him without sharing with him the reasons. Or perhaps he wished to content himself with the modest honor of having pointed the way, deliberately leaving to his contemporaries the honor of carrying on the work themselves.

I hope that you will pardon my brief letter and that I will stay in your good graces.

Your,

B, no. 140; *AA*, III, no. 168a. Johann Friedrich Flatt (1759–1821) was a professor of theology and philosophy at Tübingen and a Kantian of some reknown. Fichte and Flatt engaged in a brief, cordial exchange of letters during the fall and winter of 1793, while Fichte was living at the home of his new father-in-law in Zurich. This exchange, which centered around the problem of free will, was occasioned by a letter from Flatt responding to Fichte's review of Leonhard Creuzer's *Skeptischen Betrachtungen über die Freyheit des Willens mit Hinsicht auf die neusten Theorien dieselbe*, which appeared in the October 30, 1793, issue of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (see *SW*, VIII; 411–17; *AA*, I, 2; 7–14).

1. *Aenesidemus, oder über die Fundamente der von dem Hrn. Prof. Reinhold in Jena gelieferten Elementar-Philosophie: Nebst einer Vertheidigung des Skepticismus gegen die Anmassungen der Vernunftkritik* (1792), published anonymously, but written by G. E. Schulze. For a discussion of the development of Fichte's own philosophy during this crucial period (when he was trying to come to terms with Schulze's skepticism and writing the *Eigne Meditationen über ElementarPhilosophie/Practische Philosophie*), see the editor's preface to Section I, above.

6. To Niethammer, December 6, 1793

Worthiest and truest friend, the only appropriate way I know to thank you for the kind proof of your continuing friendship is to show you through deeds my high opinion of your pure love of truth and my unlimited trust in your friendship.

Your essay[1] is very encouraging evidence for me of your good opinion of my present views, because it shows that you have studied my second edition[2] with an attentiveness which presupposes the hope of finding something in it. If the content of my work is of any significance, then I can attest that, to the extent that your essay parallels it, you have really understood and expertly expounded Part I. In Part II, I presuppose (along with all previous Critical philosophers, including Kant himself) that it is a fact that there is in man an a priori moral law. Then I prove—in a manner which still seems to me to be completely self-evident, given

my presupposition—that this law can only be applied to a faculty which is *necessarily determined* on one side and is *spontaneous* from the other. (This faculty may be called the "faculty of desire" or whatever else anyone wants to call it.) At the time I could not very well trace things back any further—nor did I wish to do so. The reason why I provided a complete discussion of the lower faculty of desire in the first part of the section was so that I could show, in the third part of that section, the connection of both [faculties of desire] to the production of a belief. This seems to me to be the most important point contained in the second section. Furthermore, I believe that an exposition of the two remaining parts would be a service useful for the present state of the Critical Philosophy.

Here however, with your permission, I would like to draw your attention to a few points in addition to the one mentioned in your letter, points on which, in my opinion, you have been misled by Reinhold. It is quite true and correct in itself that "the form of reason consists in *absolute unity*," but only for the faculty of representation does it consist in the *production* of unity. Furthermore, there are various types of unity: the unity of the faculty of representation is *synthetic*, whereas the unity of practical reason is merely *formal*—the opposite of contradiction. On p. 50 you refer to the operations of reason (which are represented only empirically) qua *representing* faculty. But insofar as reason is practical, it is by no means a representing faculty, but just the opposite. Admittedly, Kant himself is responsible for the misinterpretation that one has to conceive the moral law to be applied to all rational beings in order to be able to see its universality. But for Kant this is supposed to be no more than an empirical test, not a transcendental feature of the moral law. Pure philosophy is acquainted with only *one I*, and this single I ought not to contradict itself. There are not several categorical imperatives, but only one. Pardon me for this remark—which you will certainly do when you read further.

I said above "for the present state of the Critical Philosophy," and now I must confess sincerely (*and confidentially*) that I am dissatisfied with the current state of the Critical Philosophy. I am deeply convinced that Kant merely pointed to the truth, but without exhibiting it or proving it. Either this marvelous and unique man possessed an ability to divine truth without being conscious of the reasons for it, or else he did not value his age highly enough to share these reasons with it, or else he was reluctant during his own lifetime to attract that superhuman veneration which must sooner or later be his. No one has yet understood him—those who think they have understood him best have understood him least. Only by reaching Kant's results in one's own way will one have understood Kant, and then the world will really be astonished. Just a couple of examples: Kant said that there *is* experience, and on the basis of this proposition constructed a proof that experience is impossible.

Anyone who wants to resolve this contradiction by explaining the ambiguity of the word "experience" in Kant will find more than he thought he would find. Kant's followers, however, thought that all they had to do was to prove *that* experience is something real. Kant demonstrates that the causal principle is applicable merely to appearances, and nevertheless he assumes that there is a substrate underlying all appearances—an assumption undoubtedly based upon the law of causality (at least this is the way Kant's followers argue). Whoever shows us how Kant arrived at this substrate without extending the causal law beyond its limits will have understood Kant. Kant based the moral law upon a fact (which is correct, if one understands it properly), and his followers believe that they are thereby everywhere justified, whenever demonstration and explanation prove to be a bit troublesome, in having recourse to a fact *foi d'auteur*.[3] They do this without considering that their opponents are entitled to the same right, and that thereby any absurdity can be proven from an alleged fact—for which no further proof can be supplied, but for which everyone appeals to his own consciousness, with no way of showing why he deserves to be believed any more than his opponent. There is only one original fact of the human mind, a fact which is the foundation of philosophy in general, as well as of its two branches, theoretical and practical philosophy. Kant was certainly acquainted with this fact, but nowhere did he state it. Whoever discovers this fact will present philosophy as a science. This discoverer will not be one of those persons who have rushed to complete their systems after studying only the *Critique of Pure Reason.* No such person, I fear, will ever understand Kant.

Such, dear friend, are my hopes and expectations—which, however, I keep locked in my breast. From the bottom of my heart I wish us both luck; I hope that we have not been in too great a hurry and that we have kept our minds open for more mature convictions, and I wish the same thing for every good young man. I wish you carefree leisure, a wish based upon love for you and for science. I now have the prospect of dedicating at least a bit more time to science in peace. I have married a person in Zurich who prefers me to any of her own countrymen and has remained constantly faithful to me despite incredible temptations during three years of separation. As much as this modern Abdera may deeply displease me in itself, nevertheless, until my fate bids me otherwise, I will pass many rather pleasant days here in conjugal amity and the pursuit of science. But I will certainly not relinquish such leisure before I have erected some monument to it.

Rest assured that I will be delighted by the continuation of our correspondence. Remain my friend.

Your true and esteeming friend,
Fichte

B, no. 135; *AA*, III, no. 169. Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766–1848) was a professor of theology and philosophy at Jena who, in 1792, published a pamphlet, *Ueber den Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*, which was a spirited defense of Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation* against some of the criticisms that began to appear in print just as soon as it became known that the author of the book was not Kant. Niethammer's defense of the then unknown Fichte was a generous act, and his admiration for Fichte was sincere. (Indeed, Niethammer was certainly one of the people at Jena responsible for nominating Fichte to succeed Reinhold.) In some ways, Niethammer may be considered to have been the first 'Fichtean." In 1795 he founded the journal *Philosophisches Journal einer Gesellschaft Teutscher Gelehrten* in which many of Fichte's own essays and articles first appeared and of which Fichte soon became coeditor. Niethammer remained closely allied with Fichte throughout the latter's career at Jena and was involved with him in the "Atheism Controversy" of 1798–99. The exact date of this letter is uncertain. I. H. Fichte gives a date of October 1793. *B* gives the date of November–December 1793. But *AA* assigns it the date of December 6, 1793.

1. "Versuch einer Ableitung des moralischen Gesetzes aus der Form der reinen Vernunft," which Niethammer published in the *Philosophisches Journal für Moralität, Religion und Menschenwohl* in 1793. This is the text of Niethammer's which Fichte cites later in this letter.

2. This is a reference to the second edition of Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*, which included an entirely new Part II, in which Fichte, influenced by his study of Reinhold's Elementary Philosophy, attempted to develop his own "Theory of the Will."

3. "Trusting the Author," that is, merely on the author's say-so.

7. To Stephani, mid-December 1793

Your letter brought us all the greatest joy. As old men and wives will, our father and my wife had who knows what anxieties on your behalf. Being braver, I thought that things must be going quite well for you, and that you would certainly write to us in your own good time. This time has arrived, for which we are sincerely grateful.

I do not have so many interesting things to share with you as are contained in your letter. My wife has written the count that we have been married for a few months and have made a short journey together. The Zurichers have discovered the secret of being so cordially nasty to me that I often see no one but my wife and her father for four or five weeks at a time. I have not been out in company twice since your departure. The furious sectarian strife between aristocrats and democrats continues apace. It is said in public that we held meetings of a Jacobin Club at Ott's country house when you were living there, etc. Were I not occupied with more serious matters, I might tell these new Abderites what I think of them. But they deserve no thought at all, neither good nor bad. But cheer up; things will not remain like this in Germany. I have recently made a few discoveries (which have not yet been brought entirely into the light). The seed of good things is present. It is germinating and will burst forth in good time. The good which we have often discussed accomplishing is already accomplished in part, though I do not yet know the particular details.

The most remarkable thing I know comes out of my study, and perhaps, given your kind interest in my scientific activity, you will not disdain to hear about this. Have you read *Aenesidemus?* It has perplexed me for some time now. It has overthrown Reinhold in my eyes, has made me suspicious of Kant, and has overturned my whole system from the ground up. One cannot live under the open sky. It cannot be helped; the system must be rebuilt. And this is what I have been faithfully doing for the past six weeks or so. Come celebrate the harvest with me! I have discovered a new foundation, on the basis of which it will be easy to develop the whole of philosophy. Kant's philosophy, as such, is correct—but only in its results and not in its reasons. This singular thinker looks more marvelous to me every day. I believe that he possesses a genius which reveals the truth to him without showing him why it is true. In short, I believe that in a few more years we shall have a philosophy which will be just as self-evident as geometry. What consequences do you think this will have for mankind? We have no wish to conceal the lamentable state of contemporary philosophy—as is only too well demonstrated by the recent controversies concerning freedom and by the misunderstandings among the Critical philosophers themselves. From the point of view of the new standpoint that I have reached, these controversies concerning freedom appear ridiculous. It is amusing when Reinhold tries to make everything that happens in the human soul into a representation. Anyone who does this can know nothing of freedom and the practical imperative. If he is consistent, he must become an empirical fatalist. I am happy that you now judge my *Discourse*[1] more favorably. I confess that it is my personal favorite among my writings. My *Contribution*[2] has caused something of a stir, and (according to what people write me) I am unfortunately rather widely held to be the author. I hear that Reinhold is the one who made this public. The printing of the second part was not completed in time for the fair, but it will be ready soon. The publisher (who is very fearful) writes me that your *Catechism* will also appear shortly at one of the ends of the earth. Both of my writings are banned in Berlin. In my leisure time I would like to prepare a sting for the Berliners—one which they will not be able to ban. I wrote you something about life among the nobility! And recently I was invited to become tutor to a prince of Meklenburg-Strelitz. I stipulated some unacceptable conditions, and nothing came of it. Now I wish for nothing except the leisure to carry out my project. Afterward, fate may do with me whatever it wishes.

B, no. 145; *AA*, III, no. 171. Heinrich Stephani (1761–1850) was a young private tutor whom Fichte met in Zurich during the summer of 1793 while he was waiting for the protracted legal arrangements for his marriage to Johanna Rahn to be completed. The two young men shared a house in the country and became good friends, drawn together by a common interest in political questions and a shared enthusiasm for the French Revolution. In 1797 Stephani dedicated his *Grundlinien der Rechtswissenschaft oder des sogennanten Naturrechts* to Fichte.

1. Fichte's *Discourse on the Reclamation of the Freedom of Thought from the Princes of Europe, Who Have Hitherto Suppressed It* was anonymously published in 1793.
2. *A Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution,* Part I (see above, letter no. 4, note 1).

8. To Reinhard, January 15, 1794

If I recall correctly, Reverend Sir, my last letter to you was written under a strain which was the inevitable result of travel, disparate sensations, and exhausting work. A mature and temperate judge of men would certainly see in that letter no lack of respect from the side of the younger man. Surely I have not lost your good will on account of that letter, and surely it is not for this reason that you have not replied to it. Perhaps you did not reply because you wished to give me the tacit permission to convey to you the results of the inquiries mentioned in that previous letter. I am acting upon this belief.

Aenesidemus has completely convinced me that philosophy, in its present state, is not yet a science at all; but it has only strengthened my conviction that philosophy can—and, before long, must—become an actual science. I have contributed a review of this book to the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* I would like for you to read this review and to be so good as to share with me your opinion of the hints that it contains. This review (so far as is possible within the narrow limits of a review) indicates my new viewpoint. The skeptic will always be victorious so long as one clings to the thought of a connection between our knowledge and some thing in itself which is supposed to possess some sort of reality entirely apart from our knowledge. Therefore, one of philosophy's first aims is to demonstrate clearly the futility of such a thought. If philosophy is thereby limited to an indirect acquaintance with the not-I via a direct acquaintance with the I, it is also more than probable (even on a provisional basis) that there must be a system of rules governing the operation of our mind and that this system can be presented in a manner which is valid once and for all. So far as we have been able to observe it, our mind appears to operate according to rules; therefore, it might very well always operate according to rules. Either it must be possible to establish philosophy as a universally valid science, or else it must not be possible. If it is impossible, then it must be possible to prove that it is impossible, in the same way that, for example, it can be proven that no empirical natural science can ever be totally complete. If, however, a scientific philosophy is possible, then it must be possible to achieve it. To deny that this is possible on the grounds that no such philosophy has yet been established seems to me just like saying, prior to the invention of the

science of geometry, "geometry will never become a science, because it is not yet a science." (For the situation in geometry, before it had become a science, was probably like the situation in philosophy until now, with *one* problematic system constantly overthrowing *another*.) And to say that we can never know that our system may not be overturned by some future discovery seems to me just like saying to a geometer who has just demonstrated that the sum of the angles in the triangle is equal to two right angles: "One cannot really know this, for in the future triangles might be discovered whose angles make 170 or 190 degrees." But isn't it true that philosophy, unlike geometry and mathematics, is quite unable to *construct* its concepts in *intuition?* Yes, this is quite true; it would be unfortunate if philosophy were able to do this, for then we would have no philosophy, but only mathematics. But philosophy can and should employ *thinking* in order to *deduce* its concepts from one single first principle which has to be granted by everyone. The form of deduction is the same as in mathematics, that is, it is the form prescribed by general logic. I am, esteemed patron, well aware how much I have claimed and promised in all that I have said here, as well as in the review. But I do not do this entirely without deliberation. I have already erected the framework upon my first principle, and I have already discovered how to make the transition [from the theoretical part of philosophy] to the practical part. It will be easier to work out the details of the practical part, since the form of the structure is already present in the theoretical part.

How freely and without restraint I tell you of my projects, plans, and discoveries, without even knowing for sure whether I retain your permission to do so! But away with all doubts! If my first letter did not displease you, then my last one cannot have done so. This is the hope which allows me to write to you once again. I have begged you to allow me to see you only as the estimable man and scholar—and not as the court chaplain of Saxony. I cherish this privilege too highly to deprive myself of it deliberately. But perhaps you may occasionally allow me to mention to you the name of a man who can be mentioned in the presence of someone who, like you, appreciates every talent, because he combines them all in himself. If this is permissible, then the man I would like to call to your attention is Master Weisshuhn (Friedrich August, not his older brother).[1] Anyone who attended Pforta between 1773 and 1779 can tell you about this man's extraordinary talents, which were evident with a remarkable maturity from his earliest years. I have been his most intimate friend since 1781 and can testify to his excellent character. During the past five years spent at his father's house in Schönerwerda (near Querfurt), talents such as have only rarely been united in a single person have been slowly withering and dying under the pressure of circumstance. He writes me that his health has now improved somewhat. I have advised him to make himself known to you, and I hope that

he will do so. I should also like to mention the name of pastor B. at W., who as I saw for myself on my last journey, lives in circumstances of extreme poverty of the sort which depresses the spirit. (This is typical for Thuringian country pastors: is this what they study in order to become?) But this oversteps the bounds to which my modesty confines me.

A letter testifying to your continuing goodwill will completely reassure

Your faithful admirer,
Fichte

B, no. 149; *AA*, III, no. 175. Evidently Fichte had received no reply to his earlier letter to Reinhard (see letter no. 3) when he wrote this letter from Zurich almost a year later. Presumably, the project which Fichte describes in this letter is the manuscript titled "Eigne Meditationen über die ElementarPhilosophie/Practische Philosophie."

1. See above, letter no. 1.

9. To Lavater, beginning of February 1794

P. P.[1]

I would like to add the following to what I had the honor of saying to you last night: My style of lecturing is always synthetic. I never throw out thoughts as they occured to me in the privacy of my study. Instead, I think, discover, and develop my thoughts before the eyes of my audience and along with them. In doing so, I endeavor, even in the smallest portions of the lecture, to follow the most strictly logical path. Since I will have almost everything written out, I rather hope to master this form of lecturing. This seems to me to be the foundation of all clarity: the only way that more clarity can be obtained is by giving frequent examples (where the material permits) and by outlining the structure of the argument on the blackboard. It appears to me that the only way in which this aim can be combined with your wish to complete something in its entirety [in this course of lectures] is as follows: I will have to devote two or three hours to prolegomena concerning the concept, the characteristic features, and the method of demonstration of philosophy, as well as the relation of this science to other sciences with which it is confused. I will then develop—as completely and as clearly as I can—the first principles of *all philosophy,* followed by the first principles of *theoretical* philosophy, in order to show how one proceeds in the theoretical realm. I will then merely enumerate the remaining principles of theoretical philosophy, in order to provide a general survey of them and of their interconnection. This would take up the first month. In the second month, in a similar manner, the highest first principles of *practical* philosophy will be presented in detail. The method of proceeding in this part of philosophy will be shown with particular reference to the highest first principles of

practical philosophy. No more than a survey of the interconnection of the additional principles can be provided. I see no other means to combine the wish for clarity with the wish for completeness. For were I to lecture in detail merely upon practical philosophy, then an entire year would hardly suffice. In a few years I will indeed present my entire system to the public, and, in any case, I would be honored if the gentlemen who now join with me in oral conversation on these subjects should ever wish to engage in a written dialogue with me concerning those points which might still remain obscure to them.

If you approve of this expedient, then please be so kind as to inform the other gentlemen. I remain, dear Pastor, with truly warm esteem,

Yours truly,
Fichte

B, no. 154; *AA*, III, no. 183. Johann Kasper Lavater (1741–1801) was Zurich's leading pastor and a well-known author of religious treatises and poetry. But Lavater is best remembered for his efforts to establish the "science" of physiognomy. Fichte met Lavater during his first stay in Zurich, but the relationship between the two appears to have been strained at first. Eventually, however, the two men became much closer. When Lavater learned that Fichte had been asked to assume Reinhold's chair at Jena, he made hasty arrangements for him to deliver a series of philosophical lectures in Zurich during the first months of 1794 (see above, editor's preface to Section II). In this letter Fichte outlines the format and projected content of his lectures. Even after his departure from Zurich in May of 1794, Fichte continued to solicit Lavater's opinions and advice, until the "Atheism Controversy" of 1798–99 occasioned a final rupture between the two erstwhile friends.

1. *Praemisses praemittendis:* "omitting titles," i.e., "to whom it may concern."

10. To Reinhold, March 1, 1794

Dearest and most honored friend,

With the joyous feeling of having established with you, most estimable man, that accord which I so deeply desired, I shall here take advantage of the confidence to which this new accord entitles me. We certainly need not begin by proving to each other that which is so deeply engraved in our hearts, and it is equally certain that our inquiries have no purpose except completely securing these same holy convictions[1] against anything which in some hour of weakness might seem capable of weakening them in ourselves or in others. The review of *Aenesidemus* in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (a review of which I am the author) will have indicated two things which I wish to be equally obvious to you: first, how highly I value your inquiries and how much I owe to you; and second, where along that path which you have so laudably pursued I believe I have to go further. I have already sketched at least the major portions of that system to which I referred in the review, but it is still far from being clear enough to communicate. Nevertheless, we are already in such close

agreement that I am almost certain that one day we will reach complete agreement. (Our points of agreement are not limited to the main results, but include the smallest details as well. This includes not only those views of mine with which you are already acquainted, but especially my new convictions.) I would like to believe that the differences which I now perceive between us are based on the fact that I have not yet completely understood your system. I have the same relation to Kant, whose writings I am nevertheless much more convinced that I have understood. It seems more and more probable to me that Kant proceeded in his deductions from the very same first principles that I begin with, despite the fact that he does not use the same vocabulary, but rather lays down principles which, taken literally, often seem to contradict mine, and despite the fact that he is also far less systematic than I wish to be.

What can I do about these differences? I believe I must first of all clarify my own system to the point where it can be communicated. Either this task will enable me to understand your system completely, or I shall be fortunate enough to make my own system clear to you. It will then become evident where the basis for our differences actually lies. You, honored friend, are the only person by whom I wish to be judged and corrected. Moreover, knowing myself as I do, there is scarcely anyone else who would be able to do me this service.

I have read your excellent work *On the Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge* several times and have always considered it the most masterful of your masterpieces.[2] I am completely in accord with what you say about the general procedure of philosophical reflection and about the requirements which must be met by any philosophy at all, and, more specifically, the requirements upon its first principle; indeed, I could show you that I wrote down approximately the same things even before I read your work. Thus it remains all the more inexplicable to me why, even now, I am unable to grant that your Principle of Consciousness possesses those distinctive features which, as we both entirely agree, characterize any first principle. In my view the Principle of Consciousness is a theorem which is proven and determined by higher principles.[3] I have been avidly awaiting the second part of your *Contributions*.[4] I particularly look forward to the explanation of how you will now derive the categories. (To derive them from the logical forms of judgment presupposes that logic provides the rules for philosophy, and this I cannot accept.) I also expect to find there an explanation of the basis upon which you will construct a practical philosophy. In general, I believe I can certify that I have applied the appropriate effort to understanding your system. In composing the review of *Aenesidemus*, for instance, I filled more than twelve sheets with notes on your "New Presentation of the Most Important Points in the Elementary Philosophy" in the *Contributions*.[5] I can only hope now that

your comments on my future system will provide me with complete insight into your own. If, in the meantime, I have to evaluate those views which I have up to this point considered to be yours—(and how can anyone say or write anything about the Critical Philosophy without continually coming back to you?)—then my judgment can only be valid for you to the extent that I have really understood your views. And even if the warmth of our friendship had not made your fame seem like my own, the tone of my judgment would still have to reflect my deference to the most incisive thinker of our age.

I wrote the second part of my *Contribution*[6] last summer in four weeks amidst constant distractions and opposite a large and noisy construction site. So please have patience with it. At that time I did not hope that it would be read by men like you, and I scribbled it down merely to satisfy the publisher. Please judge it accordingly. I would certainly handle the chapter concerning the nobility differently now; however, I do believe that I said many new things about the church. I am also the author of the short essay *A Discourse on the Reclamation of Freedom of Thought.* The reviewer for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* was of the opinion that it contained nothing new. He may be right about that. He criticized the use of the expressions "freedom of thought" and "conscience"; in that he was certainly right. I knew this as well as he, but for the sake of clarity I wished to employ the usual expressions. He is certainly wrong, however, in accusing me of Jesuitism on account of one particular passage. If Jesuitism implies confusing morality with natural law then it is he who is the Jesuit, because he took as a moral principle one which I had expressly established as based on natural law. The essay is unimportant, but I believe that it has some merit as far as its style is concerned. My publisher complains that it remains almost entirely unknown.

Do you know who will be named your successor in Jena? It is I. Imagine how happy I am to be *your* successor. Of course I would have greatly preferred to be your colleague. You will probably not still be in Jena in the middle of May; if you are, I will have the pleasure of seeing you there. In any case, I hope that this pleasure will still be mine some day. My wife wishes to revisit Hamburg, where she spent her childhood and where she has relatives. So I might very easily go there from Jena sometime during the Easter vacation. I could see you either in Hamburg or in Kiel. I am confident that as my friend you will give me any information you have about Jena or my future position there.

A pleasant prospect for the Critical Philosophy! Until now it did not seem to be made for Zurich, but recently I have been lecturing on this subject for Lavater (that excellent man whom I have gotten to know better thanks to our Baggesen and whom I love and respect more each day) and several of Zurich's leading men. Of course I can give them little

more than a foretaste between now and the end of next month; but if the urge to think independently is awakened in some of them and if the prevailing prejudice against the Critical Philosophy is shaken a bit, that will be a sufficient achievement.

I am delighted at the prospect of carrying on our discussions in writing at least, since for the time being I can scarcely hope to do so orally. I embrace you with all respect and friendship.

Yours,
Fichte

B, no. 157; *AA*, III, no. 189. Concerning Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758–1823), author of the Elementary Philosophy, and, at the time of this letter, occupant of the chair at Jena devoted to the Critical Philosophy, see above, editor's preface to Section I. At the time of this letter, Fichte was still in Zurich and Reinhold was still in Jena, although preparing for his move to Kiel. Obviously, Fichte was anxious to establish friendly relations with the man he would be succeeding at Jena. He also had a genuine personal debt to Reinhold, since the latter's philosophical system (the so-called Elementary Philosophy) had played such an important role in the development of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Reinhold, who had no doubt been instrumental in obtaining for Fichte the offer from Jena, was favorably disposed toward his young successor, not just because of their philosophical affinities, but equally important, because the two men shared liberal political sympathies and were both enthusiastic supporters of the French Revolution. The correspondence between the two was initiated by the efforts of Jens Baggesen, a friend of Reinhold's who met Fichte in Switzerland and encouraged him to write his first letter to Reinhold on November 13, 1793. This letter, which was mainly confined to political topics, received a warm reply from Reinhold, who responded on January 12, 1794. But before Reinhold's letter arrived, Fichte, obviously impatient for a reply to his first letter, sent a second letter to Reinhold (January 14, 1794) in which he hinted at their philosophical differences. Reinhold's reply (February 6, 1794) assured Fichte that he would not be offended by any philosophical differences that might develop between them and promised to read carefully everything Fichte wrote. The following letter was written shortly after Fichte had made his differences with Reinhold public (albeit in a discreet manner) in the *Aenesidemus* review, which appeared in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in February 1794. Fichte was obviously concerned about how Reinhold might react to the *Aenesidemus* review and thus here minimizes his differences with Reinhold and offers reassurances of his respect for the author of the Elementary Philosophy.

1. In his letter to Fichte of February 6, 1794, Reinhold had written: "Philosophical reason seeks to find the *ultimate grounds* for convictions which must already be held, and which are thus, to this extent, not dependent upon the grounds which one is trying to discover. In and of themselves, these ultimate grounds do not matter to either of us. What matters is that we *share the same holy convictions*."

2. *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (1791). An excerpt from Reinhold's *The Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge* is translated by di Giovanni, in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 53–96.

3. See Fichte's *Aenesidemus* review, where this point is elaborated in some detail.

4. Part II of Reinhold's *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Missverständnisse der Philosophen* appeared in the spring of 1794.

5. Chapter 3 of Part I of Reinhold's *Beyträge*. The manuscript to which Fichte refers here is the previously mentioned "Eigne Meditationen."

6. The "second installment" of Part I of *A Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution*.

11. To Goethe, June 21, 1794

Honored Sir,

I tried to find you shortly after your departure in order to give you the first sheets, which I have just completed.[1] You were not there, so I am sending what I would have preferred to give you in person.

Philosophy will not have attained its goal so long as the results of abstract reflection fail to conform to the purest spirituality of feeling. I consider (and have always considered) *you* the representative of the latter on that level of humanity which we have presently achieved. Philosophy is right to turn to *you. Your* feeling is its touchstone.

The correctness of my system is vouched for by, among other things, the inner connection between the whole and each single part and between each part and the whole. This is not something which I have generated; it was already there. The extraordinary fruitfulness of this system also vouches for its correctness. This fruitfulness surpasses all my expectations, and it too is something for which I am not responsible; indeed, I have often been and still am astonished by it. Neither the interconnection nor the fruitfulness of the system reveals itself at the beginning of the science. They reveal themselves only gradually as one progresses in this science.

I do not know whether I can yet claim to have provided a clear presentation of these matters, but I do know that if I had the requisite time I could achieve greater clarity—as much clarity, in fact, as could ever be desired. Taking into account my public lectures, I have to fill at least three printers' sheets each week, quite apart from any other business. I expect your indulgence on this account.

I hoped (perhaps because I so passionately wished it) to appear with you in the same publication.[2] I do not know whether I may still so hope. A few days ago at any rate, Schiller had still not received your decision.

I remain, with genuine respect, your most devoted,

J. G. Fichte.

B, no. 178; *AA*, III, no. 211. Fichte met Goethe shortly after arriving in Jena in May 1794. Though Fichte always expressed the highest admiration for Goethe's wisdom and literary achievements, most of his dealings with Goethe were in the latter's capacity as privy councillor to the administration at Weimar. At least at first, Goethe seems to have admired Fichte as well, despite his reservations about Kantian philosophy in general and about the *Wissenschaftslehre* in particular. This letter was written just a few days before the "affair" over Fichte's allegedly revolutionary remarks in one of his public lectures forced him to appeal to Goethe for protection and advice (see above, editor's preface to Section IV).

1. The "first sheets" in question constituted the initial installment of the "printed manuscript" of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (see above, editor's preface to Section VII).

2. This is a reference to Schiller's proposal for establishing a new journal, *Die Horen* (see above, editor's preface to Section VI).

12. Fragment of a Letter to Reinhold, March–April 1795

. . . Or is your verdict based on the belief that I have listened to derogatory rumors about you? It is true that several people have spoken or written to me, people who *could* know if anyone knows. They tell me that in conversation you expressed the deepest and most intractable hostility toward me, and that the surest way to annoy you was to utter my name in your presence. They say that though you never mentioned me by name in your lectures, you often (indeed, in the company of those you know well enough, incessantly) expressed very bitter opinions about those unwilling to accept your Principle of Consciousness as the first principle of all philosophy, claiming that such persons do not understand the issue, cannot have understood it, and never will understand it. These remarks were assumed to refer to me, precisely on account of the bitterness observed in your conversation. It is also true that I myself have seen a letter in which you say that you take note of the fact that I am departing more and more from your standpoint. I have also heard that in another letter you assert that I have tried to climb too high and have lost my way, and that from time to time you have peered down from your height and jeered at my undertaking. It is true that such judgments coming from a man of your authority cannot be very pleasant for me. It is true that the fact that you have not written leads me to suspect in my heart that you have probably cooled toward me since the announcement of my project. *But I still did not believe all of this or even half of it. I did not consider it impossible, but I did not accept or reject it. I left the matter quietly in its place and waited for things to clarify themselves somehow.* It was not my duty to write to you, because I believed I had a right to expect you to write me. Please believe this, and take my word *that these rumors had not the slightest influence on my attitude toward your system.* It would have made no difference if I had been completely convinced that these rumors were true, or if we had been on the most friendly terms and corresponded most confidentially—in neither case would I have added or subtracted a word.

But should I not simply have rejected such rumors as impossible? That is what you seem to imply. You say a study of your writings and the accounts of your friends should have led me to have more confidence in your unselfish character than my behavior reveals. Allow me two remarks in this connection.

First: Fichte hears the above rumors about Reinhold. He has read his writings and knows one of his friends well.[1] He says nothing and waits patiently for an explanation. He is wrong to do so, for he should at once have rejected all of these rumors as completely impossible. Reinhold hears that Fichte is grasping at every possible opportunity to attack him. He too has read one of Fichte's writings with enthusiastic approval and their mutual friend also speaks well of him. But Reinhold does not stop

to ask questions; he pronounces Fichte guilty and condemns him at once—and he is right to do so. At the very least, Reinhold must be a spirit of confirmed superiority and Fichte must be, at the very least, a decided and publicly recognized scoundrel.

Second: You are wrong in thinking that one has only to read your writings to recognize the unselfishness of your character. In the letter to which you refer I expressly stated that I at least had come to have second thoughts on this matter because of the manner in which you conduct your disputes. Similarly *all* your friends that I know consider it quite possible for your personality and emotions to have an influence on your inquiries into truth. None of them said that I was wrong to worry that in setting up a new system I might find myself in a situation with respect to you like the one which has in fact arisen. But the man who believes he knows you best and who respects you most assured me that you would, nevertheless, publicly acknowledge the truth once you were convinced of it. (May I say in passing that I myself also believe this; only I fear that your passionate nature will make it very difficult for you to understand the truth.) Rather than going into this broad subject, I wish merely to investigate the present case and to examine coolly whether your conduct in this case attests so decisively to your unselfish character.

First, the basic principles which will govern my judgment: I enumerate these not to instruct you, but in order that you yourself may judge whether they are valid and whether I do you an injustice in examining your conduct according to them.

The pure friend of truth never confuses truth with himself as an individual. He considers truth much too sacred to expose it to the influence of so frail a being as the latter. He brings to light what he considers to be the truth, and as soon as he has produced it from within he forgets himself and considers the result communal property that belongs to him neither more nor less than it does to anyone else who has the ability and the will to take possession of it. If what he has established is indeed the pure truth, then he deserves no credit; for he has not *made* it, but only *found* it—that it was he who found it is nothing more than a stroke of luck. If what he established is false, it is similarly not his fault so long as his search was an honest one. His error is bad luck and nothing more. If someone else substitutes the truth for his error, the lover of truth rejoices that the truth has been found and does so without any thought of himself. He does not have to be ashamed of his error, because he would not have considered himself superior if he had found the truth, and he can look down with unimpaired dignity on the fool who mocks his mistake. Only the enemy of truth—not the man who has erred—deserves the animosity and severe reproach of the staunch friend of truth. Such are my basic principles, and I am prepared to be judged according to these principles by you, the world, and posterity. For instance, re-

gardless of the fact that I consider your system erroneous and mine (in contrast to yours) correct, I can still respect you with all my heart and consider you far superior to me if you have more strength of character and love truth more than I. Even if I succeed (as I believe I can) in establishing philosophy as a science, I would not consider that I had *thereby* acquired the least merit. In establishing philosophy as a science I am only acting as a tool of nature. Only that which I freely am pertains to me.

I believe that you share these basic principles with me, but your behavior in this matter seems to me to indicate that you lack the strength and coolness to follow them steadfastly. You have made erroneous inferences, inferences that no philosopher could have made except in passion. And why should one become impassioned when his system is refuted unless he has confused himself with his system and believes that an attack on his system is a personal attack on himself? Only in a state of passion could you listen to your correspondent when he says: "It has been reliably *reported* that Fichte *grasps at every possible opportunity* to attack you." According to this, your correspondent did not hear this himself. I do hope he heard it directly from someone who had attended my lectures and not in an even more roundabout fashion. But whose *judgment* is it that I *grasp* at *every possible* opportunity or that I refute your system in *my* way (which in the context cannot be a very *good* way)? Is this the judgment of a *person who has attended my lectures* or is it that of the *correspondent?* I am sorry not to know the great man who can take in at a glance a system whose main ideas a man such as Reinhold admits that he has not yet grasped—a system, moreover, which I have not fully presented in my lectures. This unknown man grasps my system so completely that he is able to judge what it includes and what it does not, either simply from attending my lectures or merely from listening to the accounts of others (for no notes are taken during my lectures). Indeed, he knows exactly *where* something can be included and where it is absolutely impossible. [How is it possible] that I am unacquainted with this great man who knows me so completely that he need only mention my manner in order to indicate the error of my remarks and who could, therefore, refute me in a few words? Could even someone like Reinhold repeat such things without seeing the least maliciousness in it? Tell me, do you then in all seriousness consider me such a pitiful bungler? I will overlook the other examples of your correspondent's bad taste—the expression of dislike, for example. I assure you on my honor that since I have been in Jena I have seen no one who had the right to be so presumptious.

You say that even my peculiar ideas will aid your progress and that you will never forget that it was these thoughts which made that progress possible. I will take these words at face value and ask why in the world

should you not forget, or why you should think of that at all? What does it matter whether it was through reading Caius or Titius that you were able to develop the truth from within you? What does the man, the person, have to do with it? This is what I do not and will never understand. This is where our *thoughts*—or at least our *feelings*—part company. Caius cast his book upon the waves for anyone who wished to pick it up; he did not intend it for you. You picked it up and through your own efforts mastered his discoveries. For this you can thank fate and yourself—but not Caius. I at least (if my writings should prove useful to you or to anyone else) absolve you and everyone else of any obligation to thank me. If anyone wishes to thank me simply out of his own goodwill, that would be good and proper; but I have no right to demand thanks, and as soon as I demand it I make myself unworthy of it. You say you will never scornfully kick away the ladder which has made your ascent possible. If you have to erect a more convenient ladder, one for which there is no room until the first has been removed, then of course you will have to remove it. Naturally you should not do so *scornfully;* that would be unreasonable. Only immorality, not error, is an object of scorn. Nevertheless, it will still be up to you to show that the ladder in question is not the best one. You say you will never consider my opponents interesting and praiseworthy just because they are my opponents. I must understand these words as you wish them to be understood, for you are said to have repeated elsewhere and to others the accusation against me which they imply. If I consider important some opponent of yours whom you consider unimportant there are two possibilities: either I really do consider him important and have thus made (in your opinion) an incorrect judgment, or else I am praising him, despite my own convictions, merely to offend you. What gives you the right, what drives you to assume the latter rather than the former? Why would you rather credit me with malice than lack of judgment? Have you proceeded coolly and philosophically, or emotionally? Moreover, here again you are forgetting that I see your system through eyes very different from yours; thus, of course, some author may be interesting and important to me merely because he is a *thorough-going* opponent of your system or (to use the common expression) because he is your opponent. I know of no writer who opposes *you* (i.e., who is your personal opponent), and I would be far from finding a man interesting for that reason. I myself, however, am a declared opponent of your system. But why can one not be an opponent of your system and at the same time be your personal friend? I believe that I have justified my opinion of *Aenesidemus.* From my review of it, it should at least be clear to you that I have acted in good faith. It is true that I now think much less highly of the literary merits of *Aenesidemus* than I did even then; yet it does seem to me that it has refuted your Elementary Philosophy. My respect for Maimon's talent knows no bounds.[2] I firmly believe that he has completely overturned the

entire Kantian philosophy as it has been understood by everyone until now, including you, *and I am prepared to prove it.* No one noticed what he had done; they looked down on him from their heights. I believe that future centuries will mock us bitterly.

I have completely disregarded the affidavits which you enclosed. I do not wish to repeat what your own feelings must long since have told you.

Finally: you, like Kant, have given humanity something it will always retain. He showed that one must begin with an investigation of the subject [i.e., the I]; you showed that the investigation must proceed from a single first principle. The truth which you have uttered is eternal; your name too may become eternal if you do not demand it. Certainly it is worthy of you to place no store in your name. Let what is perishable perish and turn to dust like chaff. What is eternal will endure without any help from you.

I at least have not decided whether you love anything *more* or even *as much as* truth; I do not believe that this has yet been decided at all. This is the sole thing upon which your worth depends; it does not depend at all upon the correctness or incorrectness of your system. It seems to me that you have now reached the point where this question will be decided in the eyes of all honest men, of posterity, and (if I may mention myself after all these) in my eyes as well. Until then I am neither your friend nor your foe. I do not know you well enough to be either. If the decision turns out as I hope, I will honor and love you whether you wish me to or not. You will not, however, reject a love that springs from this source, for it will at the same time demonstrate to you that I am worthy to love you.

Along with that weaknesses with which you have given me the right to reproach you, there is mixed a nobler trait which I recognize and sense. You expressed very favorable judgments concerning me when you left Jena and also during your journey, and you thereby smoothed the path which I had to travel. . . .

B, no. 228; *AA*, III, no. 272. This letter, which is missing both its opening and closing pages, was written in reply to Reinhold's letter of January 7, 1795. In his letter, Reinhold repeated a number of rumors he had heard concerning Fichte's behavior in Jena, including rumors that Fichte was using his lectures to denounce Reinhold and that he was justifying these attacks on the grounds that he had heard that Reinhold was attacking him in *his* lectures. Reinhold began his letter of protest by quoting from a letter he had received from an unnamed correspondent reporting on Fichte's alleged criticism of his predecessor. Reinhold, who seems to have been a good-natured man, wrote to assure Fichte that he had not been using his lectures in Kiel to attack Fichte's system (with which, moreover, Reinhold claimed to be unacquainted). As evidence that he was telling the truth, Reinhold even enclosed in his letter a number of affidavits testifying to the fact that he had neither maligned nor criticized Fichte in his lectures. After chiding Fichte for believing such malicious allegations and for responding to these imagined insults by publicly criticizing the Elementary Philosophy, Reinhold went on to say that he often recommended Fichte's writings to others and that he would be glad to become better acquainted with Fichte's system.

1. Viz., Jens Baggesen, who was presumably the source of the offending rumors on both sides.

2. Concerning Salomon Maimon (1752–1800), one of the most original and independent interpreters and critics of Kant, see above, text note 2 to Section III.

13. Draft of a Letter to Baggesen, April or May 1795

My dear friend,

I have a suggestion to make to you, but before I get to the point, I must ask you to lay aside your friendship for me and to pretend that this letter is from a perfect stranger.

You must have heard what has happened in Jena and in particular what has befallen me. Anyone acquainted with the thoughtlessness and bad manners of our young students will be annoyed with this business.

I am becoming more and more convinced that it will require half a lifetime to elaborate the *Wissenschaftslehre*—and a lifetime free of worry and work at that. One needs to be able to allow everything to reach proper maturity and must not be forced to lay before the public a single word which does not meet with one's complete and sincere approval. Nor must one ever tremble before that thought which frightens me, namely, the thought that I might die before completing this vast structure. But what German scholar has such leisure? Klopstock's pension enabled him to complete his poem. But this pension did not come from any German prince; it came from the king of Denmark.[1] No king or prince will grant a pension to the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* for one can see from the first principles of this system that it is incompatible with kings and princes. And even if one of them were to offer me a pension, I would not accept it.

I would accept a pension from the nation of France, which is just beginning to turn its attention toward the arts and sciences. This, I believe, would be appropriate for France. My system is the first system of freedom. Just as France has freed man from external shackles, so my system frees him from the fetters of things in themselves, which is to say, from those external influences with which all previous systems—including the Kantian—have more or less fettered man. Indeed, the first principle of my system presents man as an independent being. During the very years when France was using external force to win its political freedom I was engaged in an inner struggle with myself and with all deeply rooted prejudices, and this is the struggle which gave birth to my system. Thus the French nation assisted in the creation of my system. Its valor encouraged me and gave me the energy I required for grasping

my system. Indeed, it was while I was writing about the French Revolution that I was rewarded by the first hints and intimations of this system.[2] Thus in a certain sense this system already belongs to the nation of France, and the question is whether that nation wishes externally and publicly to appropriate my system by supplying me with the wherewithal to develop it.

If the French were to grant me a pension for the rest of my life, or at least until the completion of my work, I would pledge to write it (whether published all at once or issued in installments) in the universal language, Latin, even if this requires the aid of others who have a better mastery of this language. (It would be much harder for me to write the book in French, and besides, it seems to me to be much more in the spirit of the French nation to want to bestow a gift not upon itself but upon the whole of cultivated Europe.) Such a pension would permit me to live, not extravagantly, but decently, and it would secure my future against certain unfavorable influences which otherwise might soon affect me. It is also a safe bet that this would allow me to extricate myself from all other ties and even to stand up against hostility. I would preface the book with an acknowledgment that it is to France alone which I owe that leisure which allowed me to bring it to completion. Should the nation wish to confer a title upon me, the only one I would want would be "Citizen of France." I would live somewhere in Alsace or in some other German province of the republic, since I do not know the French language well enough to employ it in ordinary conversation.

I hope that these thoughts will be passed on, but until it comes to fruition, I would [not] want it to be known that the proposal comes from me. If it does come to fruition, then this can be made known, and the entire public will be able to recognize my confidence in the nation. I would also not like for this proposal to originate from you, because your friendship for me might cause you to pursue the matter too enthusiastically. Perhaps you could interest your friend Bacher[3] in this matter. If he is already in Berlin, then of course you will first have to find out what he thinks about philosophy, about Kantian philosophy, and about me in particular. And you will also have to find out whether he is sufficiently steadfast, for he cannot expect to receive advice from anyone in Berlin. People there consider Kantian philosophy to be empty intellectual fantasy, and they are not personally fond of me.

I hope that you will soon find the time to write me and tell me what you think about my proposal and whether it has any likelihood of success.

With the assurance of my unwavering friendship and in the spirit of an honest handshake between men,

Fichte

B, no. 231, *AA*, III, no. 282a. Jens Baggesen (1764–1826) was a popular Danish poet and writer who traveled widely and had a large circle of literary friends and acquaintances. Lavater and Jacobi were both friends of Baggesen, as was Reinhold. Baggesen made Fichte's acquaintaince in Switzerland during the winter of 1793–94, where he was present for at least some of Fichte's Zurich lectures on transcendental philosophy. Baggesen visited Jena the following year, where he renewed his friendship with Fichte and again attended some of his lectures. Baggesen himself was something of a philosophical enthusiast, and his many surviving letters testify to the strong impression Fichte's philosophy and personality made upon him. In the *Musenalmanach für das Jahr 1797* Baggesen published a parody of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* in light verse: "Die gesammte Trinklehre: Rundgesang," which, surprisingly enough, Fichte seemed to have greeted with good-natured enjoyment. The precise date of letter no. 13 (of which only a draft survives) is uncertain. *B* dates it April ?, 1795, whereas *AA* gives a date of April–May 1795. Though the letter was probably written from Osmannstädt, where Fichte fled after his violent confrontation with the student fraternities, it might have been written from Jena just prior to Fichte's departure. For more information on this affair, see the editor's introduction. As the content of this letter indicates, Baggesen was on his way to Paris when Fichte sent him the letter (probably intended to reach Baggesen in Zurich, where he would have been stopping on his way to France). There are some minor differences between the text published in *AA* and the version in *B*.

1. In 1751 the king of Denmark, Friedrich V, granted Klopstock a yearly stipend, which was originally meant to support him until he could complete his religious epic, *The Messiah*, but which in fact continued until his death in 1803.

2. Fichte wrote the first portion of his *Contribution toward Correcting the Public's Judgment of the French Revolution* in Danzig in the first half of 1793.

3. Theobold Bacher (1748–1813) was secretary to the French embassy in Basel.

14. To Reinhold, April 28, 1795

There still remains a small disagreement between us which, I fear, separates your heart from mine rather than mine from yours. Let us set this straight and then I will shake hands with you in spirit to seal our reconciliation.

The old issue has been taken care of. Your new complaint is as follows: I should not have written that last letter to you. I should not have judged you according to strict general principles, but rather, according to your own statements. I should have put myself in your place, etc. Again, I must disagree. In the first place I really did what you ask. I was far from seriously accusing you of harboring those intentions which your conduct would indeed have presupposed *if it had been premeditated.* I wished to show that you allowed passion to make you overhasty. My proof went as follows: If you had dispassionately considered the matter, your conduct would have had to be based upon this, this, and this principle. That cannot be; therefore, etc. Thanks to your candid admission, which does you credit, we are now in agreement concerning the matter.

[You say that] I should not have conducted my proofs so sharply or so "rabidly." Let us judge this matter in accordance with strict principles:

In your first letter you do not consider your violent attacks to be outbursts of passion; instead, you treat them as arguments which proved that I am an indiscrete teacher, that I wickedly and ungratefully destroyed the respect in which you were held, that I betrayed our friendship, etc. We were at war and fought with the same weapons. I could only meet your arguments with arguments of my own. Was I duty-bound to assume that since sending your letter you had already come to regret your haste? Was I not allowed and even obliged to accept you as you presented yourself in the letter to which I had to reply?

As for the question of fairness and love: even assuming that I could have known or presumed that you had since had second thoughts, could I not have had some additional reason for forcing the matter to a head? I had such a reason and here it is: With all my heart I wished and still do wish for the establishment of friendly relations between the two of us. This was not possible unless you admitted that you had been overly hasty. Such an admission was what I was trying to obtain from you, and I had no way of knowing how great an expenditure of force this might require. Now the situation is entirely different, and that injury has been completely expunged from my heart, along with all the manifold consequences which it has already had for me and must continue to have.

Now I can also *excuse* that hypersensitivity which you displayed again in your last letter. I can also excuse the completely false interpretation of my words to which this hypersensitivity led, as well as your bitter response. I can do this because I now judge you from that standpoint [of friendship] in which you yourself have placed me. But I must still *correct* this interpretation so as to induce you either to *prove* it or to *recant.*

Where in my letter is the assertion which insinuated that my adherence to my system must represent a love of truth while you adhered to your system out of self-love (etc.—for I wish you to recall precisely the expressions you employed)? Or, if you cannot find such an assertion in my letter, why do you allow yourself to use these—and even stronger—expressions of bitterness? I was not castigating you for clinging to your system, but rather *for taking amiss an examination of your system, an examination, moreover, whose contents—whatever they might have been—were unknown to you.*

Where do I insinuate that it was envy and jealousy which led you to find my latest writings obscure and to say so when asked? Did I not expressly declare (and I hope that you believe my assurances, as I unconditionally believe yours) that I passed absolutely no judgment on all the accusations which I heard concerning you and on all the interpretations which were given to your behavior? Instead, I waited calmly for your explanation, with which I am now completely satisfied. You write that it will not matter to you if I uproot the seeds which you planted in your lectures; I assume this is because *you* will have planted and *I* am destroy-

ing. Of course, reason demands that this not matter to you (granted that it is possible that truth is replacing what was perhaps an error); but reason demands this, not *because* you planted the seeds, but *despite the fact* that *you* did so. Your personality should not be taken into account at all. Am I wrong in this? I was not speaking about *myself* at all. I would like to know whether there was any reason for this bitterness except your own hypersensitivity. This hypersensitivity must also be the source of your otherwise incomprehensible misunderstanding that I had set up *acceptance* of my system as the criterion of your love of truth. I give you and the whole world leave to despise me utterly if I ever say something like that.

The difference between our systems is not a matter for discussion here, unless one believes that I *pretend* that it is greater than I really *believe* it to be in order to enhance my attack upon you. (In fact, your friends have accused me of such dishonesty.) As I know my own innermost heart, this is not the case. But I can indeed err in my judgments; I can have failed to grasp your system properly.

In any case, my quarrel is not with the *correctness* of your assertions, taken in themselves; that I grant for the most part (though it seems to me that you have not properly proven many things that are in themselves true). Our real disagreement concerns *what* your system actually is. The very *existence* of the *Wissenschaftslehre* depends upon the answer to this question. According to you, your system is that Elementary Philosophy which, as you have explained several times, constitutes the *foundation of all philosophy*. In my view, your Elementary Philosophy is only a philosophy of the theoretical faculty. Such an Elementary Philosophy can and should be a *propaedeutic* to all philosophy, but by no means its *foundation*. I believe I expressed myself on this point very definitely as early as the review of *Aenesidemus*, and did so even more clearly in my prospectus.[1] We disagree on this issue as much as we agree on the heart of the matter. As I see it, the issue here is as follows: If [in your Elementary Philosophy] you have established the foundation of the whole of philosophy, then it is from the faculty of knowledge that *you* will have to derive the faculties of feeling and desire—as faculties of the same sort. *Kant* has no desire at all to subordinate these three human faculties to any higher principle; instead, he leaves them merely coordinated.

I am in complete agreement with you that these faculties must be subordinated to a higher principle, but I do not agree that the theoretical faculty can serve as the highest principle in question. On this point I am in agreement with Kant, though I do not agree with him that these faculties should not be subordinated at all. What I subordinate them to is the principle of subjectivity as such. You cut this path off completely with your Elementary Philosophy, because you already have a highest principle, but one which I consider to be subordinate. Kant

leaves this path open, because he has only declared himself against the subordination [of these faculties] to the theoretical principle. The conclusion of my prospectus, as well as the Theoretical Part of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*, is extremely obscure. I know very well that the *Wissenschaftslehre* contains within itself an intrinsic element which makes it obscure and even incomprehensible to many people (though certainly not to you). However, I hope that the Practical Part of the *Foundations*, together with a work of mine specifically devoted to theory,[2] will help to make things clearer. The printing of these has been accidentally delayed. As soon as I have my copies I will send you one.

Since this discussion has in any case arisen, let me say that I am deeply convinced that you have carried the *Critique of Pure (theoretical) Reason* a step further. (Unfortunately for philosophy, it appears to me that this was the *only* book you had in front of you when you designed your system.) You have convinced people that all philosophical investigation must proceed from one basic principle. No one, it seems, is allowed to do everything. All I had to do was to combine Kant's discovery, which obviously points in the direction of subjectivity, with your own. Thus I deserve the least merit of all.

Whatever my merit in this area may be, I place no value on philosophical merit or indeed on any theoretical merit; I am striving for something quite independent of such theoretical merit. This attitude (to the extent that I know myself) has its roots in the innermost core of my being. I am well aware that perfection is something that I too can only strive for, but at least I will not *knowingly* allow myself to be in any way dishonest, and where I have erred I will freely admit my mistake just as soon as I recognize it, and will rectify it so far as I am able. I will joyfully acknowledge all that is good outside of me and will extend my warmest respect and love to all right-thinking and honest men, and I will be all the more ready to do so when they combine kind hearts with exceptional talents. After your last letter, I count you among such men, despite the haste that I perceived in that letter. I will therefore respect and love you. Nevertheless, I realize that you can neither do me complete justice nor respect and love me so long as you continue to recall that *unjustifiable* injury which I am supposed to have done you and so long as you consequently believe that I can only knock down what I perceive to be other people's pride by means of my own greater pride, etc. But I patiently expect that time and my conduct toward you (which will remain unalterably the same from now on) will take care of all this.

As for von Hammerstein, I will tell you what is common knowledge, and of course I will leave it up to you to decide *what* portion of this information you want to use in dealing with the countess of Münster and *how* you wish to use it.[3] She will probably know of his previous conduct in Göttingen. The timing of his appearance in Jena in the middle of the

semester and just after the dissolution of the Constantist fraternity would lead one to believe (as is universally believed here) that he was summoned to Jena from Hildesheim (where he had been giving private lessons for some time) to reestablish this fraternity, whose main supporter he was in Göttingen. At any rate he has reunited the perjured members of the order (who had only abjured it a few weeks ago) and has made this crudest of all the local fraternities even cruder than before. Since his arrival he has disturbed a number of young people and has already been suspended once on account of a gruesome act of violence. Since that time, however, he is constantly harassing various young men whom he knows to be well mannered and calm (e.g., von Zwanziger and Phelps)—cursing and shoving them on the street, in order to draw them into arguments and thereby into the fraternal order. He has often been successful in this. His latest misdeeds have not led to an inquiry. He is universally feared. At the moment he and his followers and the worst followers of another fraternal order are staying with a severely wounded brother in Ziegenhain, where they lead the most disgraceful life. He attended lectures during the first weeks of his stay but has not attended any since. Some students who know him quite well have spoken highly to me of his conduct when he is without his gang, in better company, and sober. They also speak highly of his talents. It seems, therefore, that he himself is better than his conduct. This much is certain however: because of the false direction that his ambition has taken and because of the gang that gathers around him, he can be of no use to Jena, nor can Jena be of any use to him. Moreover, sooner or later he will be investigated, and after all that has happened such an event could not be to his advantage and would set him dangerously at variance with his father, who is said to be a respectable man and very unhappy with his son's conduct. I, for my part, have no way to contact him. Professor Hufeland is presently away, but I will speak with him about this as soon as he returns. In my opinion the best thing for him would be to get him out of Jena quickly and courteously. Let him spend three or four years leading a normal, middle-class life; then, if he is to receive further education, let him attend a university where there are no fraternal orders. Even here I know young men who are now models of industry and modesty but who many years ago led the most disgraceful lives here. They left the university and became involved in middle-class life; then, years later, they returned to make up that education for the neglect of which they had already paid a bitter price.

With those sentiments which I believe I have expressed throughout my whole letter in such a way that they cannot be misunderstood, I bid you farewell.

Fichte

For reasons which I do not have the time to go into today, I will be spending this summer in the country outside of Jena.

B, no. 236; *AA*, III, no. 283. Reinhold's reply to Fichte's previous letter of March–April 1795 (above, no. 12) has not survived, but it evidently succeeded in soothing Fichte's wounded feelings. This letter was written from Jena and includes several references to the previously mentioned controversy over the abolition of the student fraternities.

1. Viz., *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre*, translated above, Section III.

2. Viz., *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty*. The *Outline* and Part III (the "practical" part) of the *Foundations* were finally published at the end of July or middle of August 1795 (see above, editor's preface to Section VII).

3. Charlotte Sophie Henriette Wilhelmine, countess of Münster, was the mother of the student Hans Georg von Hammerstein, whose exploits are described later.

15. To Schiller, June 27, 1795

The conceptual confusion which you attribute to me is a little hard to bear. I could not have expected you to understand the task as I understood it (i.e., in a sense opposed to the usual sense of the words, though the usual sense seems to me to be nonsensical), but I did expect you to have enough confidence in me to assume that when I direct my thoughts at a particular object I might perhaps discover something about it which you might not have seen, since you had not directed your thoughts in this particular manner. I expected this because you have judged my philosophical talents favorably until now, and because you had allotted to me an honorable place in the *Horen*. I did not expect that you would suddenly suspect me of having the most confused of minds. I see that I was wrong.

Here is how the matter stands: You have not understood my title ["Concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy"] correctly, or to put it plainly, you have entirely misunderstood the whole idea. The meaning that you attribute to it has no meaning at all. As far as *I* know, spirit in philosophy and spirit in the fine arts are as closely related as any subspecies of the same genus—an assertion which I intend to prove. On the other hand, I would like you to explain how one can speak of the spirit *of* philosophy (not the spirit of Leibnizian or Kantian philosophy, for example) in the same way that one speaks, for instance, of the spirit of the Prussian religious edict. Philosophy *as such* is not at all a matter of the letter; it is pure spirit, and what I was trying to do was to grasp this spirit and to establish its nature. Supposing that philosophy is something sharply distinct from all actual *knowledge*, how is it, do you suppose, that people ever came to philosophize? Isn't it likely that there would have to be within man an original tendency to philosophize? And what if the

tendency in question were the drive to represent simply for the sake of representing[1]—the same drive which is the ultimate basis of the fine arts, of taste, etc.? If you had asked yourself these questions (as I would have hoped even the beginning of my discussion, i.e., the first three letters, would lead you to do), you would probably have spared yourself this overhasty judgment. I have always understood the task in just this sense, and this was the sense in which I treated it in my public lectures, as perhaps von Humboldt can testify. I never thought that a careful thinker (if he were to consider this issue) could understand the task in any other way. I thought that *this* was the question upon which I was working for the *Horen* and I believed that I was doing so with your approval. I was thunderstruck when [in your letter] I read, "spirit in opposition to the letter," etc.

You have done me an injustice, and I hope that you wish to rectify it, as it becomes any honest man to do. I will complete the essay and send it to you (not for the *Horen,* of course), and then perhaps you will take back the disdain in which you now hold me.[2] If not, I will of course send it to some of the suggested arbitrators. Until then, this will remain a matter between the two of us.

I hope that you will then realize (as you should actually have already been able to realize) that what I have presented so far is inseparable from the topic and that I was not taking as long to get to the point as you believe. I am alarmed both at the madness and at the ignoble motives which you must have attributed to me, since you did not understand this. I told you that the essay would fill nine to ten printers' sheets, and it would not have been longer.

Anyone who lacks spirit is *spiritless.* He can neither create a work of art nor can he philosophize. Or, should he produce a work of art or a book of philosophy, it will possess all the proper outer characteristics but not the inner spirit. What would you call the latter sort of author to distinguish him from the former? I called him a *literalist.* Did I begin by opposing spirit to spiritlessness and then opposing to the letter? Not at all. I opposed the spirit *in a particular work of art* to the "body" or letter of the same work. *Among those who work in the fine arts,* I distinguished between those with spirit and the literalists; but I did not make such a distinction *among people in general.* What kind of bungler do you take me for! You must have read the essay very superficially.

If the only thing wrong with my classification of the drives is that there is no place therein for the "drive for existence" (the material drive), then my classification is in no danger. A drive for existence prior to all existence, a determination, therefore, of something that does not exist! All matter arises as a result of a limitation of what is spontaneously active; matter does not arise from its own activity. (*The presentation of matter* within the mind [i.e., our representation of matter] is something differ-

ent. Understandably this pertains to the knowledge drive.) Only through limitation does a drive become a *drive;* without limitation it would be an *act.* The essence of a popular presentation seems to me to lie in proceeding synthetically. I had to begin by *ascending* to the basis for my classification of the drives, for I did not wish to proceed by descending from this foundation to the individual drives. At the proper time we shall see whether my designations can be relied on. Until that time I ask you to believe that I had good reason for classifying the drives as I did. You find the basis for my classification unreliable because you have no idea of the full scope of what I have provisionally designated as the "aesthetic drive," and because you yourself classify and designate things differently. We hold different opinions, and I do not have to remind you that the question of who is right must be determined by our reasons for holding these opinions. You had not yet heard my reasons, and until you had there was no way for you to decide who was right. But where did you get the tone you used in announcing your decision, and what right have you to use such a tone? Of course I must put up with it when people I do not respect treat me like a schoolboy reciting his lesson. But I cannot be indifferent when you employ such a tone, because I greatly respect you.

You claim that my principle has already had harmful effects on the theory of taste. I should like to know what these effects are: But what if they concern points on which we disagree?

Following the procedure I adopted, the consequences which my principles have for the theory of taste is something which cannot yet have been established, because I was not writing about that, but rather about the spirit of philosophy. Following the synthetic procedure, my theory of taste should and must be determined by what I have to say about the spirit of philosophy. The results will come later; but still I would have thought that even what I did say sheds a light which can be found nowhere else upon several of Kant's obscure remarks concerning the theory of taste. (For the most part I am in agreement with the results of Kant's theory.) But what am I saying? It is precisely these passages that you have questioned.

I did not discover for the first time today that we follow very different principles when it comes to the popular presentation of philosophy. I have already observed this in your own philosophical writings. For the most part you proceed analytically, following the strictly systematic path. The popular aspect of your presentations lies in your enormous store of imagery, which you employ almost everywhere in place of abstract concepts. The popular aspect of my system lies chiefly in my procedure, and this is what misled you into too quickly considering my first *Letters* weak and superficial. Once the strictly philosophical part of the exposition has been completed, I then proceed to its popular treatment according to

quite different principles. I start with a very common experience and develop the argument through what appears to be an association of ideas (though in fact the system keeps invisible watch over these associations). I specify nothing with more precision than is immediately required, until at the end a sharply defined specification emerges on its own. For me the image does not *take the place* of the concept; instead, it comes *before* or *after* the concept, as a metaphor for it. I take care to find an appropriate image, and I believe that the images used in the *Letters* are perfectly appropriate. Unless I am mistaken, all former and more recent authors with a reputation for good expository writing have done as I strive to do. Your mode of exposition, however, is completely new, and I know of no former or recent author who could be compared to you in this respect. You chain the imagination—which can only be free—and wish to compel it to think—which it cannot do. I believe that this explains why I and others find your philosophical writings so exhausting. I must first translate everything you say before I can understand it, and so must others. Whatever failings may have been found in my early writings, and however justified the criticisms of them may be, they have, nevertheless, been widely read and taken note of, and here and there one hears people discuss or repeat the contents of my writings. Your philosophical writings have been bought and admired, and they have caused much astonishment, but in my experience they have been less often read and not at all understood. (I am not talking about your poetic and historical writings. Your history of the siege of Antwerp,[3] for instance, is a masterpiece, irresitably riveting and engrossing. Nor am I speaking of your philosophical thoroughness and profundity, which I admire. I am speaking only of your style.) Among the public at large I have never heard anyone cite an opinion, a passage, or a result from your philosophical writings. Everyone praises them as much as he can, but avoids the question of what they actually say.

The main reason my sentence structure appears stiff is because readers are unable to read my sentences aloud. Listen to me read certain of my sentences, and I hope that the stiffness will disappear. But you are right, our public simply cannot read aloud, and one does better to set one's standards accordingly, as Lessing did.

I do not believe that I deserve the sharp tone that you took in commenting on my assertion that my essay would not lend itself easily to alteration. You suggested changes in my first essay[4] which were detrimental to its meaning, and I had to ask you to restore the original wording. Due to lack of time, that essay could not be returned to me for revisions, and therefore I made my request *in all innocence, with the warmest of feelings and confident that I was writing to a friend who was not inclined to weigh my expressions so exactly.* (I recall with shame that immediately afterward I presumed to burden you with a financial matter. Forgive me, I

did not realize the true nature of our relationship, and you may be sure that I will not do such a thing again.) However, the discovery that everything that I write is so urgently in need of correction has made me very attentive (as it should). I will spare no effort to discover the reason for this and to deal with it. For the moment at least, I still completely fail to understand why you have underlined various passages in the new essay—the only thing that I can see is that you have not properly understood it.

I assume you are completely serious when you indicate at the end of the letter that we will still remain friends, and I accept this with gratitude. I hope that the frankness with which I have responded to your frankness will not hinder the reestablishment of our friendship. But I believe I may assume that our friendship can only be based on mutual respect. My respect for you cannot be weakened by an overhasty judgment; only continued injustice would destroy it, and I do not expect that from you. You, however, have denied me the respect and the trust which I believed I could expect. From now on it seems, I can be no more to you than your humble follower and disciple, and that is not something which I wish to be. But I expect amends to be made at the proper time.

I am enclosing the letter of yours which I am answering, because I cannot assume that you have a copy of it. However, I would like it returned in order to justify myself if the need should arise.

Fichte

B, no. 244; *AA*, III, no. 292. Though most famous as a poet and dramatist, Johann Cristoph Schiller was also an academic colleague of Fichte's at Jena, where he was a professor of history and philosophy from 1789 to 1799. Schiller and Fichte had a shared interest in Kant's Critical Philosophy, as well as a special enthusiasm for the second *Critique* and its doctrine of human freedom. In the summer of 1794, Schiller conceived the idea of founding a new periodical in which philosophical, literary, and cultural issues would be discussed in a popular and nontechnical fashion. Fichte was invited to collaborate on this enterprise, and his essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" appeared in the first issue. Fichte's second contribution to *Die Horen* (as Schiller's new journal was called) was the first installment of "A Series of Letters concerning the Spirit and the Letter within Philosophy." On June 21, 1795, Fichte sent his manuscript from Osmannstädt to Schiller. To his astonishment, however, Schiller rejected the "Letters" manuscript and returned it on June 24, accompanied by a long letter explaining why he found both the form and the content of Fichte's manuscript unsatisfactory. Specifically, Schiller accused Fichte of confusing "spirit" in the arts with the (allegedly) very different concept of "spirit" in philosophy. Moreover, claimed Schiller, Fichte was guilty of a fundamental conceptual confusion in that he had confused the distinction between "spirit" and "spiritlessness" with the very different distinction between "spirit" and "letter." Furthermore, Schiller objected to the fact that Fichte's series overlapped too much with the "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" which Schiller himself was currently publishing in *Die Horen*. Schiller also objected to the way in which Fichte's essay was organized, and he complained that Fichte's theory of man's various "drives" was incoherent and arbitrary (in addition to being incompatible with the classification of the human drives that Schiller was employing in his own published series). Adding insult to injury, Schiller severely criticized Fichte's prose style—not just in the rejected manuscript, but in all of his writings—for its lack of stylistic uniformity and its abrupt way of swinging back and forth

between images and concepts: "You thrust the reader directly from the most abstruse abstractions right into harangues: this is the source of that unseemliness of your writings." Schiller concluded his harsh letter to Fichte with the plea "not to make the friend pay for what the editor could not help but say" (for further information, see above, editor's preface to Section V).

1. "Ein Trieb nach Vorstellung um der Vorstellung willen."

2. In fact, Fichte never continued or completed the series. But in 1800 he published the first three "Letters" under their original title in his own *Philosophisches Journal.*

3. "Merkwürdige Belagerung von Antwerpen in den Jahren 1584 und 1585," published in *Die Horen* in 1795.

4. Viz., "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth." In submitting the manuscript of his "Letters" to Schiller, Fichte had explicitly directed the editor to make no changes in the text. Apparently Schiller had made a few editorial emendations in the text of Fichte's first essay, but in his letter of June 24 he noted that the problems in the new one were too serious to be corrected in this way.

16. To Reinhold, July 2, 1795

Nothing makes such an impression upon my heart as frankness. You, dearest friend, have conquered my heart with the frankness of your last letter, through your open comparison of our individual characters. I, for my part, acknowledge your description and find it completely true. You have made me love you warmly. Your individual character makes this the necessary way for you to seal a friendship. I have always taken and wanted to take the opposite path: from respect to love. I see from your last letter that you do not deny me the former (not on account of my philosophical talent, which cannot be at issue here, but because of my character), and I am firmly convinced that you will in the end love me as I love you.

You are quite right that the difference in our temperaments must have greatly influenced the manner in which we philosophize. You obviously always aim not so much to secure your fondest expectations for yourself and others as to protect these expectations (because they spring from a different source) against all attacks of that degenerate reason which has become merely speculative. Your interest in philosophy is practical; this practical interest is the reason you philosophize, and it is the force which governs your writings. I, since my earliest youth, have looked speculation confidently and coolly in the eye. I could do so thanks to a freer upbringing in my earliest childhood, followed by the pressures—which I soon cast off—of the Pforta school, and because of my lighthearted nature and rather good health, which facilitated a firm sense of self-confidence (the injurious excesses of which I will try to avoid). It is, of course, of no small benefit for me to have mastered a philosophy which places my head and heart in agreement. Nevertheless, I would not hestitate for a moment to give up this philosophy if I were

shown that it is incorrect and to accept in its place a teaching which completely destroyed this harmony, if that teaching were correct. In that case, too, I would believe I had done my duty. The essay "On Stimulating and Increasing the Pure Interest in Truth" in the January issue of the *Horen* shows more or less what I think about this and also how I believe I act. I believe I philosophize solely in the interests of philosophy. I eagerly await the appearance of your *Socrates.*[1] Like you, I am firmly convinced that intellectual honesty is the sole condition for correct philosophizing, despite the fact that I attribute no great value at all to that good-naturedness which is also often called "good-heartedness," and therefore I attribute little value to it in philosophy either. But there is certainly no argument between us on this point, for surely you place as little value on this as I.

Allow me to give you another clue why you and most others find the *Wissenschaftslehre* incomprehensible, while, on the other hand, some others (including Schiller and von Humboldt and several of my students) find it more easily comprehensible than almost any other philosophical book. I believe it is for the same reason that the study of Kant's writing was so difficult for you, whereas for me, for instance, it was very easy. You should not assign to my expressions the same sort of worth which, for example, yours certainly possess. It has been noted, and I believe rightly, that it is almost impossible to express those thoughts peculiar to your philosophy in any way other than in the specific way in which you have expressed them. Such is not the case with my thoughts, nor, I believe, is it the case with Kant's. They can be expressed in an infinite variety of ways, and it is not to be expected (of me, in any case) that the first mode of presentation selected is also the most perfect one. The body in which you clothe the spirit fits it very closely. The body in which I clothe it is looser and is easily cast aside. What I am trying to communicate is something which can be neither *said* nor *grasped conceptually;* it can only be *intuited.* My words are only supposed to guide the reader in such a way that the desired intuition is formed within him. I advise anyone who wishes to study my writings to let words be words and simply try to enter into my series of intuitions at one point or another. I advise him to go on reading even if he has not completely understood what went before, until at some point a spark of light is finally struck. This spark of light, if it is whole and not half, will suddenly place him in that position in the series of my intuitions from which the whole must be viewed. For example, the heart of my system is the proposition "The I simply posits itself." These words have no meaning or value unless the I has an inner intuition of itself. In conversation I have very often been able to elicit this intuition in people who could not understand me at all, who then suddenly understood me completely. It is said that absolutely all operations of the mind presuppose that there is an I as well as something

opposed to it, that is, a not-I. Only through the I and the not-I are any mental operations possible. There is no reason why the I is I and the thing is not-I; this opposition occurs absolutely. (We do not learn from experience what we should include and *not* include as part of ourselves. Nor is there any a priori first principle according to which this can be determined. Instead, the distinction is absolute, and only in consequence of this distinction are all a priori first principles and all experience possible.) The unification of the I and not-I by means of *quantity,* mutual restriction, determination, limitation, or whatever you wish to call it, also occurs absolutely. No philosophy can go beyond these propositions, but *from them all of philosophy,* that is, the entire operation of the human mind, *must be developed.*

This original *positing* and *opposing* and *dividing* is (N.B.) neither *thinking* nor *intuiting* nor *sensing* nor *desiring* nor *feeling,* etc. Instead, it is the *entire activity* of the human mind, which has no name, never occurs in consciousness, *and cannot be grasped by means of concepts;* for, though it is *determinable* by all the *particular* acts of the mind (which constitute consciousness only to the extent that they are particular), this activity itself is in no way *determined.* One enters my philosophy by means of what is absolutely *incomprehensible.* This makes my philosophy difficult, because the heart of the matter can only be attacked with the imagination and not at all with the understanding; yet at the same time this is what guarantees its correctness. Everything that is *comprehensible* presupposes a higher sphere in which it is *comprehended* and is therefore not the highest thing, precisely *because* it is *comprehensible.* (Does our comprehension of the least object proceed from something other than a function of the imagination, and is our understanding of philosophy the only thing that is supposed to proceed from something else?)

The principle question with which the *Wissenschaftslehre* continues to occupy itself, a question which is answered only up to a point in the Theoretical Part, but which is completely answered in the Practical Part, is the following: If the I originally posits *only itself,* how then does it come to posit something else as well, something posited as opposed to the I? How does it happen that the I goes outside of itself? (The question "How are synthetic a priori propositions possible?" is only a part of this principle question. I am also asking "How is antithesis possible?").

Or perhaps the following will show most clearly the relationship of my system to yours and to Kant's: Kant seeks to discover the basis for the unity of the manifold in the not-I. How do you combine *A, B, C,* etc.—*which are also already given*—to form the unity of consciousness? You too seem to me to commence philosophizing at just this point. (Kant, however, does not answer even this subordinate question on the basis of a single principle; he picks up the forms of thought in a heuristic way, only *guesses at* the forms of intuition, and conducts his proof inductively. You

discovered and corrected this error.) I believe it need only be said to be understood that this question presupposes another. (Do not misunderstand me, the easiest thing is always found to be the most difficult. Nothing was simpler than Kant's thought of beginning with the subject, and yet it was thousands of years before anyone thought of it.) This question presupposes a higher one: "How do you first arrive at *A* and *B* and *C*?" [You reply:] They are *given.* In plain language this means, does it not, that *you do not know?* Very well then, either prove to me that you cannot know this and why, or else do not speak to me about philosophy as a science so long as you do not know this. At the proper time we will indeed inquire into how you may unite *A* and *B*, etc. But *A for itself* and the *subject* are also distinct, are they not? The first question, then, is how do you unite these? When we know this, then your second, subordinate question will be easy to answer for you will undoubtedly absorb *B* just as you absorbed *A*. And once *A* is in the subject and *B* is absorbed into *the same subject,* then *B* will undoubtedly also pertain to *A*. (How it happens that the unity of the subject is not thereby interrupted is, of course, something which remains to be shown.) This makes my path much easier and shorter than Kant's.

The surprising result is now revealed (a result which particularly comes to light in the deduction of time and space in my brief *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty*),[2] namely, that there is no *A* which is absorbed first, nor can there be. Instead, however high one ascends, something higher is always presupposed. For example, every intuition is necessarily posited in the *present* point in time; but there is no *present* point in time without a *past* one. Hence there is also no present intuition without a past intuition to which it is joined, and there is no first moment, no beginning of consciousness. This proves what Kant presupposed: that the not-I is necessarily manifold. This also indicates why this great thinker, who surely penetrated those very depths which the *Wissenschaftslehre* is trying to plumb, began his treatment of the not-I precisely at the point that he did. We, however, should no longer let the matter rest there.

The unity which I have established has the additional advantage of unifying not only the critique of speculative [reason] but also the critiques of practical [reason] and of judgment. This is as it should and must be. No *Wissenschaftslehre* was possible before you and Kant. But I am firmly convinced that if you had constructed your system after the appearance of all three *Critiques* (as I did) you would have discovered the *Wissenschaftslehre.* You would have discovered the unity underlying all three *Critiques,* just as surely as you correctly discovered the (just as unobvious) unity of the critique of speculative reason. (I acknowledge that your Principle of Consciousness is, at any rate, an announcement of the unity of speculative reason, concerning which we do not at all disagree.)

Try to see if you can agree with me about what I have said here; if so, then we are completely in agreement in philosophy too. If I say something with which you cannot agree, then simply assume it hypothetically, and you will have the best key to my system.

Finally, bear in mind that what you have received so far[3] is a manuscript for the use of my students. It was hastily written while I was busy with my lectures (in the winter semester I had *three* lecture courses, all of which had to be worked out almost completely) and with a thousand other very diverse activities. I had to see that the written sheets came to an end at the same time as the lectures. Of course, I firmly believe that what I have *intuited,* and, for the most part, what I have *thought,* is irrefutable; but part of what I have *said* may, at least in part, be quite wrong. That is not supposed to be an excuse. A writer should *say* what is correct; taken by itself, his *thinking* is of no help to us. As I see it, the presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre* will require by itself an entire lifetime. The only prospect which is able to shake me is the thought of dying before I have completed it, especially since I have embarked on a career which I was not compelled to take up.

The publisher assures me that the printing of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* is now finished, but that the printing of the theoretical work (which is a fragment, and only goes as far as the deduction of time and space) is not yet completed. As soon as I receive copies I will write you again. Be so kind as to communicate your doubts to me or to indicate those points which you find incomprehensible. A single word to a friend whom one knows well is often more illuminating than the most detailed explanation directed into the blue of a heterogeneous public.

Judging by what I have been able to read of it, *Schelling's* entire essay[4] is a commentary on my writings. But he has grasped the matter splendidly, and several people who did not understand me have found his essay very clear. Why he does not say so [i.e., that his essay is a commentary on the *Wissenschaftslehre*] I do not quite understand. He will not wish to deny this, nor could he do so. I believe I may conclude that he did not want to have his errors attributed to me, should he not have understood me correctly. He seems to be afraid of me. He has no need to be; I am glad that he has appeared. I am particularly fond of his references to Spinoza, on the basis of whose system mine can most properly be explained. He has an incorrect view of your system, and in that respect I am dissatisfied with him. Kant is responsible for that with which he reproaches you—*for that and for much more.* I would never have found myself at odds with you if you had not presented your first principle as the first principle of *all philosophy.* I too find it to be the first principle of *theoretical* philosophy.

Let us move on to something else. Whatever one may say about the dissoluteness and impunity of the academic fraternities in Jena, I doubt that it can measure up to the truth. You will undoubtedly have heard

rumors of the violent attack on the garden house of the good Dr. Schmid and two other citizens; you will also have heard *how the entire university interceded to obtain amnesty for [the perpetrators] of this crime* and of the brigandage since—which means that no student is any longer safe on the streets *or even in his room.* It is all true. The senate is on the point of dissolution. Nobody wishes to be provost now, and no good young man wishes to remain at this university any longer. I am hoping for dissolution as the only means of rebirth, and I fear nothing so much as the palliative by means of which they are trying to ward off the incurable disease.

In order to rescue my honor, which has been attacked by those in Jena in the most disgraceful fashion, I myself will probably be forced to render a public account of my actions.[5] For now only a few words on this subject: I had scarcely arrived in Jena when the good students began to gather around me, partly because they had been encouraged by my public lectures, partly because they assumed your successor would share your manner of thinking. They complained to me of the great harm done and sought my help. I made my lectures even more specific, and a good spirit seemed to be spreading. I urged several of the fraternity students who visited me to renounce their disgraceful groups. Meanwhile, I secretly arranged with our worthy curator, Privy Councillor *Voigt,* the means to make good use of their decision, once they had reached it. I succeeded sooner than I had hoped. One morning two seniors came to me with the request that I immediately and on the spot administer the oath of renunciation to all the members of their order. I was not authorized to do so, and they dismissed my suggestion that they apply to the academic senate. Therefore, I sent at once to the ministry and requested the formation of a commission. The matter first had to go through the well-known four courts. My people remained willing and unanimously declared their intention to dissolve their fraternity: only the members of the Unitist order withdrew. The other two delivered to me, under seal, their membership rolls and their books. They empowered me to apply to the dukes in their name for the formation of a commision. Once they had received amnesty, I was supposed to turn their sealed books over to this commission for burning—after, that is, looking at the list of names so that the oath could be administered to their members. The commission hesitated once again. During this time the Unitists spread the most disgraceful rumors about me. [They claimed that] I was destroying the fraternal orders in order to erect an order of Illuminates upon their ruins and that I had sent the papers entrusted to me to the courts, etc. (If such a demand [from the courts] had appeared likely, I would have spoken out against the courts with the bluntness that such presumption deserved.) Meanwhile, the Unitists also attacked me physically. Hundreds of students armed themselves to pro-

tect me, which I earnestly forbad. The commission arrived. I had the members of the fraternities come to me and acknowledge the unopened seals. Then they swore their oath of renunciation, and all the promises made to them—and more—were kept. But the Unitists were allowed to go unpunished in their defiance. (They still exist to this hour and have not been investigated.) *As a result of this example,* the dissolved fraternities were formed again. But neither they nor any other student have ever affronted me. Only the Unitists have continued to pursue me since then and in the most disgraceful fashion. My windows were broken for a second time, which almost killed my aged father-in-law and probably destroyed forever the health of my good wife. After that I informed the senate in a formal letter that I had no intention of enduring this any longer or of having anything whatsoever to do with an institution which allowed such actions to go unpunished. I received a vague answer, and my windows were again broken by three Unitists uttering the most disgraceful invectives. I went to the court and declared that I would no longer remain in Jena unless I received satisfaction, and that in order to demonstrate this I would retire to the country this summer. I declared that I would absolutely not participate in the university in any way until it was safe—*not merely for me* but *for everyone.* The senate received a more sharply worded official request, and it was henceforth able to discover what it had not been able to discover before. It delivered a slanderous and false report; the three perpetrators were sent away, and the senate was ordered to report this to me. I answered, accusing them, as they deserved, of lying and slandering. That is how the matter stands at present. The courts, which are only too well acquainted with this matter, wholeheartedly approve of my entire conduct. Everyone in Jena with an impure heart who is conscious of his roguery fears me and does everything possible to suppress me forever by means of poisonous slander and lies. But they will not succeed.

Whatever the consequences, I will not return to Jena until there is complete security and a good police force there; the entire public can surely rely on that. For now I am living very happily in Osmannstädt.

I not only authorize you, I implore you to spread this news in your circles. In a short while I hope to make it genuinely known.

So, dearest friend, let us form a friendship which will defy every occurrence, including the sharpest slander—that slander which, I know not how, has intruded between us from the start. I love you warmly and trust you completely. I promise you again that you will love and trust me more and more as our relationship continues. I cannot assure you that I will never be overhasty, but I can assure you that I will always be honest with you, and that you will always see my heart as I myself see it.

I deeply appreciate the news of you family. Make your newborn son and your other children my friends. As they grow up, mention my name

to them as that of someone upon whom they can count in any situation. Give my regards to your honored wife; I have recently become very fond of her father[6] as a result of a very peculiar occurrence in which his words had an effect on me quite the opposite of what one might have expected. He was naïvely and brilliantly denigrating Kantian philosophy, democracy, short hair, laced shoes—in short, everything with which I identify, or at least with which I am identified, both spiritually and physically. When I joined heartily in the laughter he seemed suddenly to remember that these were indeed the things with which I was identified and became so warmly cordial toward me that this turned into one of the most pleasant moments of my life.

I have no children, but live in the sweetest domesticity with my father-in-law and wife. My father-in-law is an old man of seventy-five, who, like Ulysses, has experienced much and has preserved through the turmoil of the world and into his old age the most genuine joyousness and a childlike heart which trusts in God and man. My wife loves me above all else, is more than she seems to be, and unites a very healthy common sense with the best of hearts. These two people are dear to me, and, though you do not know them, I hope you will love them a bit for my sake.

Embrace Baggesen for me. I am about to leave for Weimar, but if I have a moment I will use it to write to him.

Farewell, dear friend.

Yours,
Fichte

B, no. 246, *AA*, III, no. 294. By the time that Fichte wrote this letter from Osmannstädt, his misunderstanding with Reinhold was completely resolved and he was taking every possible pain to win his illustrious predecessor over to the standpoint of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Unfortunately, the "frank" letter from Reinhold to which Fichte refers at the beginning of this letter has not survived.

1. Reinhold never published a work with this title.
2. See above, Section VIII, pp. 291–304.
3. Viz., Parts I and II of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre*.
4. It is uncertain precisely to which of Schelling's early writings this passage refers. *B* identifies it as *Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (1794), while *AA* suggests *Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie, oder über das Unbedingt in menschlichen Wissen* (1795). Though the latter essay was only published in July 1795, it seems to be the more likely choice, since it includes no mention of Fichte at all but does include a discussion of Spinoza.
5. Fichte did in fact prepare for publication a lengthy, detailed account of the circumstances that led him to leave Jena in the summer semester of 1795. However, his friends in the university and court administration were able to dissuade him from publishing this document. See "J. G. Fichte's Rechenschaft an das Publikum über seine Entfernung von Jena in dem Sommerhalbjahre 1795," in *AA* II, 3: 413–47.
6. Reinhold's father-in-law was Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813), the well-known poet, man of letters, and cofounder of the influential literary review *Deutsche Merkur*. Wieland lived in Weimar, but had an estate in Osmannstädt, where presumably he and Fichte became better acquainted.

17. To Hufeland, August 3, 1795

Honored Friend,

On my behalf Professor Woltmann asked you to announce in the newsletter of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* the publication (by Haller in Bern) of Ith's *Anthropology*[1] (in two parts) as well as a work by Spallanzani,[2] the advertisement for which I passed along to Professor Woltmann. If you have not yet published these announcements, I would here like to renew my request. I was asked to take care of this last winter, but, due to my own negligence, the announcement has still not appeared. If it does not appear now, I will be unable to face Ith and Haller. I will be responsible for any costs which Haller has to pay.

Some time ago I was commissioned by the *Literatur-Zeitung* to review the third and fourth editions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* I have not yet responded because I wanted to write to you directly. I will accept this commission on two conditions. First, I must ask you to wait until next Easter, because I already owe the *Literatur-Zeitung* several important reviews, including the review of Maimon's *Logic.*[3] Second and above all, I must inquire whether you wish me to try to shed an entirely new light on this work. Kant's *Critique* deals with matters which, in the view of almost all of the public—including the *Literatur-Zeitung*—have been long settled. But in my opinion these matters are by no means settled. Recently, moreover, while studying Hume's writings I had a revelation. It did not concern what is missing in Kant's system—Reinhold was aware of what is missing there and has already written about that in the *Literatur-Zeitung.* Instead, I realized what Kant actually saw as the purpose of this work—what it was supposed to achieve, as well as what it was not supposed to achieve. I also realized how from this standpoint he was subsequently driven (in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and especially in the *Critique of Judgment*) to go much further than he had reckoned on when he wrote the first *Critique.* Of course, all these remarks can be presented only with the respect due the originator of such a philosophy. If the *Literatur-Zeitung* would like me to undertake such a revision, I will agree to do the review.

Yours,
Fichte

B, no. 248; *AA*, III, no. 297. Gottlieb Hufeland (1760–1817) was a professor of jurisprudence at Jena and was also the editor of the influential *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung.* Hufeland was the author of two very positive reviews of Fichte's *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation,* published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in 1792. He invited Fichte to become a contributor to his review in 1793 and was one of the people most instrumental in bringing Fichte to Jena. In this letter, written from Osmannstädt, Fichte discusses two projects, a review of Maimon's *Logic* and a review of the new editions of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* Neither of these reviews was ever completed.

1. Johannes Samuel Ith, *Versuch einer Anthropologie oder Philosophie des Menschen nach seinen körperlichen Anlagen,* 2 vols. (1794–95).

2. Lazaro Spallanzani (1729–99) was an Italian physicist and physiologist, as well as a celebrated author of travel books and works on natural history.

3. Salomon Maimon, *Versuch einer neuen Logik oder Theorie des Denkens* (1794).

18. To Reinhold, August 29, 1795

A variety of activities have prevented me from writing to you sooner and sending you the *Wissenschaftslehre,* which has been complete for a few weeks now.

No verdict concerning the *Wissenschaftslehre* can be more important to its author than the verdict of the author of the Elementary Philosophy, who was responsible for the final step which leads to the discovery of the *Wissenschaftslehre*—if this deserves to be called a discovery at all. Might I perhaps suggest that you first give these writings one or two cursory readings before you undertake to study and evaluate the whole and that you do so from the point of view to which several individual passages will necessarily have led you. Perhaps the task will be made easier by section 5 of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* or perhaps certain individual remarks in the *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty*—the deductions of time and space, for example—will serve the same purpose. I would particularly like to repeat my request to let words remain words. I would ask you not to judge the individual parts too strictly before you have obtained an overview of the whole, and not to seek to construct such an overview by combining the individual parts, but rather to seek to understand the individual parts from the perspective of the whole. My mind is so constructed that it must grasp the whole either all at once or not at all, and this explains the faulty construction of my writings. In the case of most established, living philosophers I do not consider it worth the effort to investigate the origins of their stubborn lack of comprehension [of my writings]. In your case, however, I have confidence in your love of truth and in your willingness to do justice to every thinker, and in particular to me. I believe in these things as firmly as I believe in myself. Therefore, any difficulties you may have in understanding me must arise from the differing economies of our respective writings—a difference which reflects most favorably on yours.

It would be highly instructive for me to know precisely to which sentences you take exception. I expect our corresondence on this subject to be so useful to me that I most urgently request that you indulge me in this, if your time permits. The correspondence would certainly not degenerate into conflict.

Further application of my basic principles should make them clear and, I hope, more generally understandable than the basic principles of any other philosopher. I have been investigating natural rights this summer and have found that no deduction of the *reality* of the concept of right exists anywhere. All explanations of it are merely formal, semantic explanations, which already presuppose both the existence within us of such a concept (as a fact) as well as the meaning of this concept. Such explanations do not even adequately deduce this concept from the fact of the moral law (which fact I am equally unwilling to accept, unless it too is deduced). In this connection, I reread Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals,*[1] and found that *here* if anywhere the inadequacy of Kant's principles can be concretely demonstrated, as can his presupposition of higher principles—a presupposition which he himself failed to notice.

Kant asserts and proves that some particular maxim (= *A*) contradicts the predicate universally valid for all rational beings (this predicate = *B*). I reply that this may well be; but this does not interest me, for what requires me to relate *A* to *B* at all? [Suppose that] I want to retain this maxim as mine alone. If it becomes universally valid, then of course I know that my game is spoiled. But why should I adopt maxims for myself in a certain sphere only on the condition that they can be thought of as universally valid? Kant does not answer this question at all.

It is clear that the necessity of the above-mentioned synthesis of *A* and *B* must first be demonstrated: it must be shown that without this synthesis there would be a still greater contradiction. The concept of a realm of rational beings, indeed the concept of any rational being at all outside of myself, has no place in such a proof. That concept is supposed to be deduced only by means of the proof. Consequently, the proof can only proceed from the I itself and in the following way: I *myself* cannot think of myself without assuming that there are rational beings outside of myself. In outline, such a proof would go as follows: (1) I must necessarily attribute to myself a certain predicate *C*. (In the course of the synthesis, *C* follows of itself from the I. *C is in the I,* but, as has already been demonstrated, the I contains nothing that it does not *attribute to itself.* Therefore, etc.) (2) I can attribute this predicate [= *C*] to myself only on the condition that I assume that there are rational beings outside of myself. (This is demonstrated by the full application of the category of interaction, which is the law according to which the I proceeds when it attributes to itself the predicate *C*.) Therefore, etc. It is assumed that the rational beings outside of me resemble me completely, therefore I must attribute the predicate *C* to them as well. *Summa summarum:* I cannot attribute *C* to myself without attributing it to beings outside of myself. Both acts are synthetically united; they are one and the same. (This entire line of reasoning possesses only theoretical validity. If I think in a

manner contrary to the condition just established, I will be thinking in a contradictory manner. It is easy to show how this proposition acquires practical validity. Man's highest drive is directed at the attainment of absolute agreement with himself—agreement between the theoretical and practical faculties, the head and the heart. If I do not accept in practice what I must accept in theory, I place myself in clear contradiction with myself.)

Kant's basic principles also contain a second gross deficiency, one which springs from the first. He says that, in accordance with maxim *A*, I ought to ask around to find out whether others agree with me. How long should I continue to seek such agreement, and when should I cease to look for it? Where does the boundary lie in this case? As I have said, Kant's answer would be: "Continue to seek agreement until you have reached the boundary of all rational being." I reply: "This is just what I have been trying to do. But where is the boundary of all rational being? The objects of my actions are, after all, always appearances in the material world. To which of these appearances should I assign the concept of rationality and to which should I not?" "You know the answer to this question all too well," Kant would have to reply. Correct as this reply is, it is nevertheless anything but a philosophical reply. I ride a horse without asking its permission and without wishing to have it ride me in turn. Why do I have more qualms when it comes to the man who lends me the horse? The fact that the poor animal cannot defend itself is quite beside the point. Thus it will always remain a very delicate question whether, though my act is supported in this case by general opinion, I am not just as unjustified in riding a horse as the Russian nobleman is when he gives away his serfs, or sells them, or beats them for the fun of it—for his act too is supported by general opinion. Once more, these questions can only be answered along the following lines: I cannot think of myself as an I without at the same time thinking of certain things as completely subject to me—specifically, those things which are unable to *initiate* anything. I stand in a causal relation to things of this sort. There are other appearances, however, to which my relation is one of reciprocal interaction; for men, the human form is the expression of things belonging to this latter class. *In my own case* I must consider this form inviolable, but I cannot do this without considering the human form to be inviolable *as such.* These two acts are synthetically united.

It is easy to use these principles to generate natural rights. In the synthetic course of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* the following proposition is to be found: I must think of myself *as an individual,* that is, as *determining* a sphere of things which cannot initiate anything (beginning with my body). (Individuality expresses itself only in the realm of sensibility. The pure, infinite I is one, and since the individuality is supposed to be that of an I, it must be an actively determining individual.) I must also think

of myself as determined in a realm of rational beings outside of myself, which I can do only if I am an individual[2] and only if I also posit such a sphere and each object within that sphere as an individual as well; therefore, etc. There can be no individual unless there are at least two of them. *The conditions which make individuality possible* are called *"rights."* It is absolutely impossible for me to attribute a right to myself without attributing it to a being outside of myself, because it is absolutely impossible for me to posit myself as an individual without positing a being outside of myself as an individual.

These conclusions can be made very clear and obvious. They explain in a striking fashion a host of phenomena which occur every day and which are little noticed for precisely that reason, but which can be recognized at once. They impart to the most ordinary concepts a strength which forcefully seizes and elevates man. And I believe that these conclusions will soon insure my basic principles against further distortions and make them obvious to everyone.

At Michelmas I shall return to Jena, where calm has been restored through military force. Anyone who does not wish to be immediately imprisoned must keep the peace. There has been no noticeable improvement in people's basic principles. It is striking to see how the best and most sensible people suddenly lose their heads completely when talk turns to the objects of their prejudices, to the rights of the fraternities, academic freedom, etc. Of course, such people do not wish to employ those rights in order to attack houses, plunder, and rob, but this must be left dependent upon their good will. To prevent them forcibly from doing such things is considered to be an injustice which cries to heaven. God may forgive those who, through long practice, have taught them these basic principles. I cannot forgive them. I almost think that there is simply nothing to be done with people of this sort, that one has to leave their education to God and to fate, and that one must be content if things can be arranged in such a way that other people will at least be able to exist alongside of them. Though I have always opposed such thoughts with all my strength and regarded them in others as a sure sign of wickedness, I have almost begun to think this way myself—may God forgive me. Things will now come to light which should anger anyone who still feels even a spark of honor. The rabble stole tin, copper, silver, clothes, and, it is said, even money from Dr. Schmidt and then drowned the deed in punch. *About five hundred students have addressed to the duke an impudent demand for amnesty for this deed.* I very much desire to see whether they will be humbled when this whole disgraceful deed has been exposed. I want to see whether they will be alarmed to see how they have let themselves be used by the most infamous of people, the leaders of the fraternities. It is terrible to say, but it is true: such a reaction is hardly to be expected. Not only students, but some professors, as well as others

who occupy even higher positions, loudly lament that the lives of so many young people are to be ruined *on account of a youthful prank!* The result will be that forty or fifty students—guilty and innocent—will be suspended, taken to the fortress and threatened with expulsion. But the fundamentally corrupt institution and the even more corrupt way of thinking and customs will remain, and in six months or a year we will see all of these horrors repeated. Despite the fact that I am maliciously persecuted, pursued, and slandered here, I still have the confidence of the few honest men. There is *one* other good, courageous man among the professors, and he and I say, request, entreat, advise, and discuss everything in its proper place. Everything that we say is found to be beautiful, true, and good, and everyone assures us of their respect. But I wager everything will remain as it is, and in the end we will have succeeded is saving nothing but our own souls. What is occurring (and you surely know *where*) is not the silent progress of reason, but rather a flaring of passion. This will be followed by an exhaustion that will be all the greater for this reason, and by that disgraceful indifference which certain people continually teach both in theory and in practice. As a result of these long journeys—of selling cheaply and buying dearly an entire houseful of furnishings, of all this moving and then moving again—my family and I have suffered losses and will have to do so again. But how gladly I would endure these loses if somewhere I could earn a crust of bread which I could eat *honorably;* for there is really no honor in teaching wisdom to people such as these.

I hope that my public account of the incidents at Jena involving me will soon be published.[3] I would like to make it scrupulously accurate and have therefore postponed the matter.

Farewell, dear friend and may you love me a little as I love you.

Fichte

P.S. In looking through the copy [of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* printed] on writing paper which I had set aside for you, I discover *one page missing.* Looking through the other ordinary copies, I find that *they* are incomplete *by half.* Consequently, I am sending this letter to Gabler[4] and asking him to send you the best copy he has left. I am extremely sorry about this accident.

B, no. 250; *AA*, III, no. 305. This letter was written from Osmannstädt, where Fichte was working on his treatment of "natural rights." Indeed, this letter provides a brilliant, brief summary of Fichte's highly original approach to the topic, subsequently elaborated in his *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principien der Wissenschaftslehre.*

1. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785). Translated by Lewis White Beck, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).

2. The phrase "if I am an individual" appears in the text of *B* but not in the new, critical edition of the text in *AA*, III.

3. See note 5 to letter no. 16, above.

4. C. E. Gabler was the original publisher and distributor of all of the books Fichte published during his career at Jena.

19. To Jacobi, August 30, 1795

I am sending you, honored sir, the continuation of the *Foundations of the [Entire] Wissenschaftslehre* as well as the *Outline* of the Theoretical Part.

This summer, in the tranquillity of a charming county house, I reread your writings, and then read them again and yet again. At every turn—but especially in *Allwill*[1]—I am astonished by the striking similarity of our philosophical convictions. The public will scarcely credit this similarity, nor perhaps will you. But your perspicacity makes me dare to hope that from the uncertain outline of the beginnings of a system you will be able to deduce the entire system. Everyone knows you are a realist and I am, after all, a transcendental idealist and an even stricter one than *Kant.* Kant clings to the view that the manifold of experience is something given—God knows how and why. But I straightforwardly maintain that even this manifold is produced by us through our creative faculty. Allow me to explain this point to you here in this letter.

My *absolute I* is obviously not the *individual,* though this is how offended courtiers and irate philosophers have interpreted me, in order that they may falsely attribute to me the disgraceful theory of practical egoism. Instead, *the individual must be deduced from the absolute I,* and the *Wissenschaftslehre* will immediately proceed to such a deduction in conjunction with its treatment of natural rights. A finite being (supposing that one can be deduced) can think of itself only as a physical being who is part of a realm of physical beings, of which a part (viz., that part which consists of those beings which are unable to *initiate* anything) is under its causal control, while it interacts reciprocally with the other part (viz., that part which consists of those beings to whom it attributes the concept of subject). (*The conditions which make individuality possible are called "rights."*) A finite being posits such a realm just as surely as it posits itself as an individual, for these are reciprocal concepts. As soon as we regard ourselves as individuals—which is how we always regard ourselves in *life,* and only in *philosophy* or in *poetry* do we regard ourselves differently—we find ourselves at that standpoint which I call the *practical* standpoint. (I call the standpoint of the absolute I the *speculative* standpoint.) According to this (practical) point of view, a world exists for us which is independent of us and which we can do no more than modify. From this standpoint, the pure I is posited outside of ourselves and is called God. (Thus even from the practical standpoint the absolute I does not disappear from view.) How else would we have discovered those characteristics which we attribute to God and deny of ourselves, if we had not found them in ourselves after all and thus denied them of ourselves only in a certain respect (viz., insofar as we are individuals)?

Realism rules within the domain of this practical standpoint. That complete reconciliation of philosophy and common sense which was

promised by the *Wissenschaftslehre* will occur when this practical viewpoint has been deduced and recognized by *speculation itself.*

What is the purpose of the speculative standpoint, and indeed of philosophy as a whole, if it does not serve life? If mankind had never tasted this forbidden fruit, it could dispense with all philosophy. But mankind has an innate desire to catch a glimpse of that realm which transcends the individual—to view this realm, not merely in a reflected light, but directly. The first person who asked a question about the existence of God broke through the boundaries; he shook mankind to its deepest foundations and brought man into a conflict with himself which has not yet been resolved and which can only be resolved by proceeding boldly to that supreme point from which the practical and the speculative appear as one. Presumption led us to philosophize, and this cost us our innocence. We caught sight of our nakedness, and since then we have had to philosophize for our own salvation.

But perhaps I am philosophizing too candidly with you? Or perhaps I am being careless in writing as if I could already take for granted your interest in my philosophy? Frankly, I expect that I am not mistaken in supposing such an interest on your part.

Allwill allows transcendental idealists to hope for peace and even for a sort of alliance [with realists], so long as idealists are content to protect their own boundaries and to make these quite clear. I believe that I have already met this condition. If I were to go even further, and were I, from within the supposedly hostile territory [of idealism], to guarantee the security of realism's domain, then by rights I should be able to count upon—not merely an alliance of a sort—but upon on alliance in every respect.

Your sincere admirer,
Fichte

B, no. 251; *AA*,III, no. 307. F. H. Jacobi (1743–1819) was an eminent man of letters, novelist, and philosophical essayist (see text note 11 to Section VIII, above). Though Jacobi was an original and influential thinker, little is available in English concerning his work. See however Norman Wilde, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: A Study in the Origin of German Realism* (New York: Columbia College, 1894). Concerning the relationship between Fichte and Jacobi, and especially the influence of the latter upon earlier and later versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, see Reinhard Lauth, "Fichtes Verhältnis zu Jacobi unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Rolle Friedrich Schlegels in dieser Sache," in *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: Philosoph und Literat der Goethezeit*, ed. Klaus Hammacher (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1971), pp. 165–97. Fichte had the highest personal respect for Jacobi, which made Jacobi's subsequent public criticism of his philosophy (in the so-called green letter, published in 1799) particularly difficult for Fichte to accept. Fichte's first letter to Jacobi was a short note of September 29, 1794, which accompanied a copy of the first two parts of the *Foundations*. This letter included the remarkable sentence: "If there is any thinker in Germany with whom I wish and hope to be in agreement concerning my personal convictions, it is you." This second letter, written from Osmannstädt, accompanied copies of Part III of the *Foundations* and of the entire *Outline of the Distinctive Character of the Wissenschaftslehre with Respect to the Theoretical Faculty.*

1. *Eduard Allwills Briefsammlung* was a speculative "novel" in the form of an exchange of letters, first published in 1776, with a second edition issued in 1792 (Jacobi, *Werke*, I).

20. To Jacobi, April 26, 1796

I received your letter on New Year's morning, just as I was engaged in a conversation about you with a fine young man, Count Purgstatt, who had seen you some time ago. I had to find it encouraging and reinvigorating that a man like you, whom I consider to be our age's finest picture of pure humanity, tells me he thinks well of me. I did not wish to allow myself to share with you the bliss you had aroused in me until I could enclose something which would permit you to judge me in more detail. Therefore I have delayed answering your letter until my book on natural rights was printed.

Since then a new edition of your *Woldemar*[1] has appeared, and thanks to your kindness I possess a copy of it. I had read the first edition, and at the time I was satisfied with it (as I am with everything you write). But perhaps because of my mood (I was engaged in a very scholastic enterprise), or perhaps because the second edition really has been so considerably improved, it did not move me then as strongly as it does now.

Yes, dear noble man, we are in complete agreement, and this agreement with you proves to me more than anything else that I am on the right track. You too seek all truth where I seek it: in the innermost sanctuary of our own being. But whereas you promote the revelation of the spirit *as spirit*, insofar as human speech allows, my task is to construe this spirit in the form of a system, so that it may be introduced into the schools in place of pseudo-wisdom. How much is lost on the long road from spirit to system! You go directly to the heart of the matter; I am occupied mainly with the rudiments and wish at first only to smooth the way. Thus it is quite possible that no one but you could see my agreement with you as clearly as I see it. For you have shown in dealing with Spinoza[2] that you are able to divest a system of its artificial trappings in order to present its spirit in its purity and are able to extrapolate from the parts to the whole to which they belong.

I am much younger than you and far behind you, particularly insofar as the unification of all the intellectual talents is concerned. But because of my goal and final purpose, I nevertheless believe that I deserve your friendship, and it is therefore with a clear conscience that I ask you to become and to remain my friend.

At present I have no more urgent wish than to become personally acquainted with you. I was close to seeing this wish fulfilled. I had

planned to journey to Hamburg during the Easter vacation, and from there I would surely have visited you. The plan was frustrated by the temporary indisposition of my wife (who, like so many other worthy women, is a very grateful admirer of yours on account of *Woldemar* and *Allwill*). When and where will I see you?

Your most devoted,
Fichte

B, no. 271; *AA*, III, no. 335. On December 24, 1795, Jacobi sent Fichte a polite letter acknowledging receipt of the *Foundations* and *Outline*, as well as Fichte's two previous letters. In his letter Jacobi declared his admiration for Fichte and his intention of studying Fichte's writings, as well as his "feeling of harmony" with the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In reply, Fichte (who was by now back in Jena) sent Jacobi a copy of the recently published first part of his *Foundations of Natural Right*, accompanied by this letter.

1. *Woldemar*, which was perhaps Jacobi's most famous work, is a "philosophical novel." It was first published in 1779. A greatly expanded second edition appeared in 1796 (see Jacobi, *Werke*, V).

2. See Jacobi's celebrated *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (1st ed., 1785; 2d ed., 1789), in *Werke* IV, 1.

21. To Berger, October 11, 1796

Your candid and joyful letter made me very happy for you and for the cause of reason and humanity. First, concerning your interest in my own paternal joy: Yes, I had a boy. He is now thirteen weeks old, healthy, and happy, and, in a manner which belies his age, he already seems to share the joy which he arouses in others. Your interest in this matter meets mine halfway, for you are the godfather of this boy. I am only now asking for your consent in this, because I had no time earlier. But your name has been listed as godfather on the church registry since the twentieth of July: that is how sure I was of obtaining your consent. I know that you are my friend and that my son can count on your friendship when I am no longer around. Now for the additional information which I owe the godfather: The child was born July 20, at about 1:00 A.M. His name is *Immanuel Hartmann*. (You know whom the first name honors; the second is that of my honest father-in-law.) The other godparents are Hülfen, Smidt (from Bremen), the wife of Court Chaplain Schulz in Königsberg (in order to include a woman), and one of the Klopstock's from Triest (my wife's uncle). May the boy have a place in your friendly heart. I hope that by the time you return to Germany he will be able to run to meet you.

I am in complete agreement with the philosophical views which you have shared with me. The aesthetic spirit and the philosophic spirit share the transcendental point of view. The former adopts the transcen-

dental point of view unconsciously, for this is the natural standpoint for the aesthetic spirit, which has no other standpoint which it might distinguish from the transcendental one. The philosophic spirit, on the other hand, adopts the transcendental point of view with full knowledge that it is doing so, and this constitutes the entire difference between the two. The philosophic spirit demonstrates that you yourself produce the world, whereas the aesthetic spirit only perceives the world as we have made it. Every object can be looked at from two sides. On the one hand, any object can be considered as a product of the rest of the world, and, considered as such, it is simply what the rest of the world is not. This gives us a view of the object as something merely limited, pressed together, and distorted—a very unaesthetic view of the world. On the other hand, the object can also be seen as the product of its own inner force. This gives us a view of the object in its fullness and life, and this view is the aesthetic one. But from where does the thing obtain its strength and life if not from you? The more strength and life a man possesses, the greater his share of the aesthetic and of the philosophic spirit. But if, like some people, we were to identify the philosophic view of the world with the former view [i.e., with the view that takes the object to be no more than a product of the rest of the world], then the aesthetic spirit and the philosophic spirit would, of course, be antipodes.

I know Zurich inside and out. The character of its inhabitants is a genuine product of sheer limitation. It would certainly be a challenge for the aesthetic sense to attempt to view the character of the inhabitants of Zurich aesthetically.

The healthy and happy mother of your godchild sends you her sincere best wishes.

Yours truly,
Fichte

B, no. 280; *AA*, III, no. 346. Johann Erich von Berger (1772–1833) was a student at Jena during Fichte's tenure there. Berger was the founder of the Literary Society of Free Men, a student society in which Fichte took an active role, especially during his first year at Jena. Berger left Jena in 1796 and spent the next year in Switzerland (where he was residing when Fichte wrote him this letter). He later returned to Jena and studied mathematics and science.

22. To Reinhold, March 21, 1797

The fact that I have delayed my response for several weeks does not make your last letter any less noteworthy and delightful. For weeks on end I have—often in the literal sense of the words—had no time to write a letter.

Now that you have actually penetrated into the *Wissenschaftslehre,* you will find (among other things) it unthinkable that anyone could be vain about discovering the viewpoint which this philosophy allows one to obtain—vain enough to ascribe it to his own, insignificant individual self as something special, whereas it plainly belongs to the entire world, and he was able to discover it merely by means of a fortunate observation. Since you are now an initiate [into the *Wissenschaftslehre*], this means—among other things—that I have the advantage of being able to speak to you without the varnish of affected modesty.

That you have actually succeeded in fathoming the *Wissenschaftslehre* is demonstrated to me, in part, by your account of how this was achieved. (No one will grasp this philosophy merely by studying the dead letter; instead, one has to produce it out of oneself in accordance with some inner exigency.) In part, this is demonstrated to me by the correct view which you now have of your own previous system, the worst defect of which, it is true, was that it treated content as something given.[1] Let me add my most ardent congratulations, partly on account of the frame of mind which accompanies this insight. This imperturbable serenity, this unflinching gaze amid the tumult of all human opinions and activities: this is something which will be yours from now on. Congratulations are also in order on account of the strength of character which you have demonstrated. To be sure, you must have already possessed this character, but you have hereby demonstrated this to yourself and to everyone who understands anything of this matter. I must confess that I did not believe that you would be able to master the *Wissenschaftslehre*—I may confess this now, because I am at the same time confessing my own error. I do not think that any man would be so perverse as to continue stubbornly to deny the truth once he has come to recognize it. Nevertheless, until the opposite is proven to me, I am willing to credit almost anyone with enough self-love and with a sufficient number of dogmatically held preconceived opinions to stand between himself and those truths which he himself has not discovered and which contradict his own assertions—even though he himself does not realize that this happens. I certainly consider you to be one of the best men to be found among our scholars. But I did not expect from you that impartiality and attendant love of truth which allows one to find his way out of an error into which he has fallen in consequence of his own dedicated efforts. Such a love of truth is not something arbitrary; it constitutes an integral part of an already acquired character, which I did not think that you possessed. Please accept now my confession of this—along with the confession of my deep respect and admiration.

I never anticipated that the way of thinking which characterizes the *Wissenschaftslehre* would find many adherents among our contemporaries, whom I cannot help regarding as somewhat petty. I only hoped to

guide men along the path until, perhaps in some more fortunate age long after my own death, it would become possible to finish what I had begun. But with men like you working toward the same end, we can advance much further along this path.

Just after receiving your letter I spoke with Hufeland about the review of the *Wissenschaftslehre* for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*.[2] He told me that someone had already been assigned to do the review, but that he was sure that the reviewer in question would relinquish the task. Hufeland wanted to write to him at once, and, assuming the answer is the one we expect, he will report the news to you himself. Since then I have inquired no further about the matter.

My philosophy should be expounded in an infinite number of different ways. Everyone will have a different way of thinking it—and each person must think of it in a different way, in order to think it at all. As more people present their view of this philosophy, it will become more and more widespread. Notice that I said "*their own* view," for I am not exactly edified by the talk which has arisen here and there concerning the I, the not-I, the I-world, and God knows what else. Considering the extraordinarily precise kind of analysis of which you are capable, it would please me greatly and would be very useful if you would make your own view of it known.

Your evaluation of *my* presentation, as it has appeared so far, is much too favorable. Or perhaps the content has allowed you to overlook the deficiency of the presentation. I consider it to be most imperfect. Yes, I know that it gives off sparks of spirit; but it is not a *single* flame. This winter I have completely reworked it for my lectures. (Attendance at my lectures is large, and among the members of the audience I have, from time to time, noticed some good minds, for whom I have great hopes.) I have completely reworked my presentation, just as if I had never worked it out at all and as if I knew nothing about the old presentation. I intend to have this revised version published in our *Philosophisches Journal*[3] (after, of course, thoroughly revising my lecture notes). How many more times will I revise my presentation! Nature has made up for my lack of precision by granting me the ability to view things in a number of different ways and by endowing me with a fairly agile mind.

You say that my tone offends and wounds persons whom it does not concern. I sincerely regret this; nevertheless, it does concern them to the extent that they do not wish to let someone tell them honestly what terrible errors they are indulging, and to the extent that they do not want to accept a bit of shame as the price for some very important instruction. Certainly the *Wissenschaftslehre* will have no effect upon anyone who does not value truth above all else—including his petty individual self. The *internal* reason for my assuming the tone in question is this: whenever I have to witness the prevailing loss of any sense of truth

and the current deep obscurantism, confusion, and wrongheadedness, I am filled with a contempt that I cannot describe. The *external* reason for my tone is the way these people have treated me and continue to treat me. There is nothing that I desired less than to engage in polemics. Why couldn't they—friend Schmid,[4] for example—hold their peace? It is true that I did not deal gently with him, but any fair-minded person who knows more about the matter (more than it is fit for the public to know) will credit me with the patience of an angel.

Can we not expect something from you for our journal? I have mentioned you in the first issue of this journal[5] (the reprinting of which will be completed tomorrow). The passage in question was written and printed before I received your last letter. I could not conveniently alter this passage for the second printing, since it appeared in the first printing and had thus already come to people's attention. At any rate, friendship does not necessarily require that we live in the same place. I esteem and love you, because now I know you thoroughly; still, I longingly wish that we might someday meet somewhere.

With heartfelt friendship,

Yours,
Fichte

B, no. 287; *AA*, III, no. 354. As this reply indicates, Reinhold's previous letter (of February 14, 1797) had announced his repudiation of the standpoint of his own Elementary Philosophy and his conversion to the standpoint of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In this letter Reinhold described Fichte's system in glowing terms as "the pure presentation of pure reason recognizing itself, the mirror of everyone's better self" and stated his intention of making his new opinion public by writing an omnibus review of Fichte's works for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (a plan to which Fichte refers in his letter). In passing, Reinhold added a few words of gentle criticism of the unncessarily sharp *tone* of some of Fichte's writings, explaining: "the *harsh* tone which you often employ against philosophical imposters (a tone which I find quite understandable) also falls upon ears—and wounds hearts—for which it was never intended."

1. Reinhold's letter of February 14 included a detailed self-critique of his earlier account of the way in which the "content" or "material" of consciousness is simply "given" to consciousness from without.

2. Gottlieb Hufeland was the editor of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. Reinhold's enthusiastic and influential review of Fichte's writings eventually appeared in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in January 1798.

3. See Fichte's *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797–98).

4. Christian Erhard Schmid was a "Kantian" and a colleague of Fichte's at Jena. Concerning the public quarrel between Schmid and Fichte, see above, editor's preface to Section VIII.

5. In "Annals of Philosophical Tone," which first appeared in the *Philosophisches Journal* in Feburary 1797, Fichte had ridiculed the so-called Kantians and their doctrine concerning the "givenness" of the "content" or "material" of experience (*gegebene Stoff*). In support of this controversial doctrine of "given content," the "anonymous Göttingen reviewer" with whom Fichte's article is concerned had appealed to the authority of Reinhold, the alleged "inventor of this doctrine." In reply, Fichte had written: "How little he [viz., the reviewer] must know of this worthy man's manner of thinking! For Reinhold loves truth and honesty more than any empty fame." Continuing in the same vein, Fichte went on to suggest that, on account of the confusion in Kant's presentation of his system, Reinhold could be forgiven for believing that Kant held a similar view concerning the "given con-

tent" of experience. In the same article, Fichte reported that Reinhold had at last "come to realize the untenability of his own system, and he has decided that he wants to be remembered as a friend of truth, even if this means that he has to forfeit his claim to be called a philosopher. Let there be peace between him and me!" (*SW*, II: 483; this particular passage is not included in the excerpt translated above in Section IX).

23. To Reinhold, July 4, 1797

You mention "the kindness and consideration with which I treat your remarks—like those of a studious but still unlearned student." I do not take this satirically, because I cannot believe that you, my most respected friend, could possibly take me or my natural way of expressing myself amiss.

I wish that you would place less value on my treatment of the *Wissenschaftslehre* and that you would spend less time studying it. Concerning the main points I am certain, but once someone has grasped these he does far better to rely on himself rather than on this very immature presentation. How much more clearly I understand this science now! My *Natural Right* is undoubtedly better.

If you subtract from your previous system the [doctrine of] "given content,"[1] this system takes on a very different meaning, and, seen in this entirely different light, all the assertions in your system turn out to be true. No one wishes more fervently than I that you would combine my new way of conceiving things with your former way. I wish this in part because, as you have rightly remarked, that is the only way you will truly be able to make the *Wissenschaftslehre* comprehensible to others.

One of my essays has just been published in the fourth number of our journal.[2] In this essay I discuss some statements from the second part of your *Selected Writings*[3] in order to explain my views concerning many of the things contained in your letter. It seemed to me that by taking in a too absolute sense that positing of the not-I which occurs in the *Wissenschaftslehre,* you might actually have run aground on shoals opposite from those you mention in your letters—that is, that you may have run aground on those very shoals on which Beck[4] was in fact wrecked. In this essay, which will probably reach you shortly after this letter, I have tried to make this point more clearly than I have ever before done in print.

In the same essay I have explained the relationship between Kant's philosophy and my own system. What you say in your letter concerning Kant's distinction between the scientific and the purely natural uses of reason strikes me as excellent, and I am in complete agreement with you on this point. In this respect Beck seems superior to Kant, although with respect to substantive matters he is much inferior. Kant never clearly realized that what was at issue was the original capacity for representing,

and the reason for this failure seems to be that he philosophized far too little about his own philosophizing. Nevertheless, in his arguments for his philosophy he advanced just as far as the *Wissenschaftslehre.* This is precisely the point on which we are still in disagreement and which I would like for you to reconsider in the light of what I have to say about it in my essay. I do not believe that Kant's explicit statements contradict the *Wissenschaftslehre*—or rather, I do not believe that they contradict it in any fundamental way. If they did, then Kant would be in utter contradiction with himself, and this would be obvious to everyone. It may be that Kant did not explicitly pose for himself the question of the origin of external sensation (though I am bold enough to believe that I have detected an answer to this question, especially in the introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*). But even if he did pose the question, he gave it *no* thought at all and assigned it to the realm of questions which are absolutely unanswerable. If, on the other hand, Kant had given even a hint that he posited the origin of external sensation *in something-in-itself distinct from the I,* then this would be a different matter and would indeed indicate that Kant had given the question some thought. But I consider *this* to be impossible; it contradicts Kant's whole system at every single point, as well as contradicting the clear declarations which he has repeated a hundred times. Perhaps you will be annoyed when you read this. Perhaps you will say to yourself, "Hasn't this Fichte even *read* the beginning of the *Critique of Pure Reason?* Hasn't he read the first paragraphs of the introduction or section 8 of the Transcendental Aesthetic?" Have patience until you have read my essay, for I explain these passages there.

In truth, I do not intend it as a reproach when I say that someone has not understood Kant, for I consider his writings *absolutely incomprehensible* to anyone *who does not already know what they contain*—and I am willing to state this just as loudly as you wish. This in no way detracts from Kant's merits as a *thinker,* although of course it completely disqualifies him as a *teacher.* (Jacobi, to whom I refer in my essay, misunderstood one aspect of Kant's writings, although he understood another aspect of them very well; i.e., he misunderstood the empirical realism, although he correctly grasped the transcendental idealism.)

Concerning your remarks about the tone I employed in my "Annals of Philosophical Tone": If you can answer my reasons with *reasons,* I beg you to tell me what these reasons are, and you can be assured that they will receive my most attentive and conscientious consideration. (You can communicate these reasons to me either privately or publicly.) In addition I will admit publicly that I was wrong, and I assure you that I will improve. My students and others who converse with me in person about my philosophy certainly do not accuse me of impatience and rigidity. That is also how I will deal publicly with those whom I can believe love truth. Up to now I have had to deal only with conceited persons who

treated me rudely and considered themselves to be experts, although they did not understand the first word of what I was saying.

You say that nothing which has only been established within the *Wissenschaftslehre* should be used to explain the standpoint of the same. Yes indeed, and the similar complaints in your *Selected Writings* about those who merely parrot Kant are also quite justified. But the *Wissenschaftslehre* employs no special terminology; I always try to employ only the usual literary language. What is it that has been established *only* within the *Wissenschaftslehre*? This philosophy assumes that every true human being is *naturally* conscious of his freedom (i.e., of his I-hood and independence). Whoever lacks and cannot obtain such consciousness is beyond help. It is true that it is only by means of the *Wissenschaftslehre* that this standpoint was first proven to be the only possible *scientific* one; but I do not expect anyone to accept this conclusion until he has first studied the *Wissenschaftslehre*. One only needs to assume it provisionally and for the sake of argument and then see how things go. I love free thinkers like Leibniz, Lessing, and Kant—thinkers who do not first ask what is to be gained before they embark upon a particular path, even if they should turn out to gain nothing from it but the exercise of their powers. I believe that there are two ways to lead other, more cautious people to take this path. The first way is to present them with the historical proof that every [other] path has been tried and none has led to the goal, that only this one path remains, and that if it is possible to reach the goal then this is the only way to do it. I believe that it is actually *your* task to prove this, and I trust that you will do so superbly. The other way to get people to take this path is to make them frightened and uneasy in their own houses, to tear down their houses piece by piece until they are left cringing in the open. This latter method is the one to which I myself am most attracted. It compels people to seek a shelter which has already been prepared for them elsewhere.

The essay to which you refer is, moreover, directed primarily at the reviewer and reveals his sins against ordinary logic. The only thing to which your remark could apply is what I say to certain wags concerning the meaning of the expressions *a priori* and *a posteriori*.[5] These remarks were not intended to teach them anything in a positive sense; such instruction can be found elsewhere (e.g., in the first essay in the same issue[6]). Instead, these remarks were only intended to show these wags that they hitherto neither knew nor understood anything about these matters and that they had contradicted themselves. I believe that my remarks served this purpose.

I was very pleased by the clarity and precision of your aphoristic presentation of the Theory of Right in your *Selected Writings*. The two points to which you object in my Theory of Right are as settled for me as any philosophical principles can be. I believe that the *separation of powers*

can never be *precisely determined in thought;* it can only be thought of in general terms. I foresee no problem with the *ephorate,*[7] so long as it is considered in the context of the *whole* constitution which I have described and will continue to describe, and so long as one does not believe that our faulty constitutions should be corrected suddenly and all at once. (This must occur gradually, and I believe that the rules for this progress are provided by a quite difference science—i.e., *politics,* to which I someday intend to devote some thought.) I do not consider the *form* of the state to be an idea, but rather a concept which can be precisely defined and one which I believe I have defined in my [*Foundations of*] *Natural Right.* The *content* of the state, that is, the actual rule of pure justice, is and will remain an *idea* so long as the reason of finite beings remains finite and so long as the infinite itself does not descend to judge our quarrels. In this respect I readily concede that even a nation assembled by its ephores could pass a judgment whose content was unjust, because the nation can err. I maintain, however, that in the cases where this happens, *only the nation has the* (formal) *right to be* (materially) *unjust.* That is, only the nation, not any individual, has the right to equate *its* decision with the decision of pure reason (a decision which we cannot obtain) and to stake everything upon this. The nation has this right because it is the highest thing on earth and can in actuality wrong no one but itself. Thus it can relinquish no rights but its *own,* and this is something which everyone has the right to do. I am not here concerned with what is useful or harmful, nor am I concerned with what may prove successful; instead, I am speaking strictly of what is a nation's right. Perhaps the fact that I have not stated this emphatically enough (even though it is quite clearly implied on p. 224) has caused some problems and led to some incorrect views. I will emphasize this more explicitly in the second part, which will be printed very shortly.[8]

One thing more: I still owe you a reply to your proposal that we join forces, and for the time being I will again have to postpone giving you a definite answer. I was delighted by the idea itself but not by the specific details of your suggestion. I hoped that we might become somewhat closer in our ways of thinking and wanted to postpone any definite reply until that time. Perhaps the time has now arrived.

I believe, dear friend, that people should be united, not in *belief* but in *action;* indeed, I think that they should unite for a *precisely determined* action. What binds men together is always an *external goal.* A society which lacks such a goal is, in fact, no society at all.

In truth, there is no present lack of goals which would be worthy of the efforts of ordinary citizens. I am not thinking of direct political efficacy; I believe this would be harmful. The scholar must work indirectly. Literature has become the most dishonorable trade, and the publishing business is nothing but a ramshackle bookseller's stall. Mad lux-

ury has dissipated the strength of even our better writers and made them dependent. Science is in greater danger than ever before. Intellectual freedom will be easily suppressed despite the stupidity of the forces conspiring against it, because the scholars themselves are of so little use.

But precisely on account of this universal confusion, stupidity, and weakness, the *calculated and well-planned* opposition of a few honest citizens who agree among themselves would carry a decisive weight.

If you like this idea, please write me concerning it, and I will expand my thoughts. The important thing would not be the number of people involved but their energy. Here, for example, Paulus[9] is the only person I know who seems promising. Nothing would be more detrimental to us than those vain people who do everything merely for the sake of causing an uproar.

If only it were possible for us to discuss this and a hundred other things in person!

With the most sincere respect and humility I commend myself to your love and generosity.

Fichte

Forgive the bad handwriting. Nothing devours more of my time than the effort to write more legibly; that is why I write so few letters.

B, no. 291; *AA*, III, no. 359. The letter of Reinhold's to which this letter of Fichte's is a reply has not survived.

1. See notes 1 and 5 to letter no. 22, above.

2. Viz., the well-known "Second Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, for Readers Who Already Have a Philosophical System" (in *SW*, I: 453–518; *H/L.*, pp. 29–85).

3. K. L. Reinhold, *Auswahl vermischter Schriften* (1796–97).

4. J. S. Beck (1761–1840), professor of philosophy at Halle, had been a student of Kant's and became one of the most original and influential expositors of the Critical Philosophy. Beck's interpretation of Kant, notable for dispensing entirely with the doctrine of "things in themselves," was presented in his massive, three-volume *Erlaüternder Auszug aus den kritischen Schriften des Herrn Prof. Kant, auf Anrathen desselben* (1793–96). See the excerpt from volume 3, "The Standpoint from Which Critical Philosophy Is to Be Judged," translated by di Giovanni, in di Giovanni and Harris, *Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 206–46. For information concerning Beck's system, see Ingrid M. Wallner, "A New Look at J. S. Beck's 'Doctrine of the Standpoint,'" *Kant-Studien* 75 (1984): 294–315, which includes a discussion of the differences between Beck's system and Fichte's.

5. See Fichte's parody of his opponents' strict opposition between a priori and a posteriori knowledge in the "Annals of Philosophical Tone," above, Section IX.

6. Viz., the first "Introduction" to Fichte's *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre*, which was published in the same issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* as the "Annals of Philosophical Tone."

7. The institution of the "ephorate" is one of the more curious features of Fichte's system of natural right. Deriving its name from an ancient Spartan political institution, Fichte's ephorate is a constitutionally established body of elders whose task is to oversee the government to be sure that it does not contravene the dictates of the "general will." When this occurs, the ephorate is supposed to summon the people together for the formation of a new government. See the discussion in paragraph 16 of the *Foundations of Natural Right*.

8. Part II of Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* was published in August or September 1797.

9. Heinrich Eberhard Paulus (1761–1851) was a professor of theology at Jena and was one of Fichte's staunchest supporters and allies.

24. Draft of a Letter to Jacob, March 4, 1799

Sir,

When you encountered that passage[1] in the mood you were in at that time, you could scarcely have been more surprised than I, in my present mood, am at your censure. The passage was written more than one and a half years ago for reasons and purposes that no longer apply. I did not foresee that you would remain unaware of it for so long.

I have only this to say:

1. I have never hated you, nor have I believed that you hated me. However presumptious that sounds, it is true. I do not really know what hate is, for I have never hated anyone. Nor am I by any means as passionate as people generally think.

The manner in which I have been treated in the *Annalen* is and will continue to be inexcusable. It will always remain a black mark in our history of philosophy. This is true however much I may respect Professor Beck, whom I recognize to be the reviewer of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*[2] I can easily believe that my *Wissenschaftslehre* was not understood, and that it is still not understood by those who believe that I am now teaching *different* principles. I know every well that this is the fault of my presentation in that text, which was not intended for the public, but for my students and as the basis for my lectures. Thus no one understood the book or gave me any credit at all. I was taken for an idle chatterer whose interference could only hinder the progress of science. From this people *concluded* that the system (which they knew perfectly well that they did not understand) would probably not be worth anything either. I know all this and find it all understandable. However, while no scholar can be expected to know everything, he should at least know whether he understands something or not, and no honest man should be expected to judge something until he is sure he understands it. Why, moreover, did they proceed with such bitterness? Why was I attacked from all sides? (Recall the first review of my *Lectures concerning the Scholar's Vocation*—a review which was a lampoon in any case.[3])

At that time I seriously feared that my voice would be drowned. This explains the provocative manner in which I pursued the plan of attack which was already laid. This also explains why I assumed that unpleasant tone which I now freely renounce—which I have, in fact, already re-

nounced. The *Annalen* alone prompted that tone. I am no longer afraid of being shouted down and the situation is now quite different.

You say you disapprove of my tone. Very well. I subscribe to your suggestion: let us declare a general amnesty with respect to all the literary judgments which have been passed.

2. In the passage in question I had no intention of casting doubt upon your character, nor, more specifically, of accusing you of self-interestedness. I was startled when I read this in your letter and looked up the passage. The only line which could be interpreted in this way must be interpreted solely with reference to the phrase which precedes it. What satisfaction can I give you? I am willing to do anything you ask. Were it not for the fear of calling attention to a passage which many people had perhaps overlooked, I would immediately have sent a clarification of it to the newsletter of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. I would have said that the passage seems to have been interpreted as derogatory to your character and that I wished to give my solemn assurance that the passage was not meant to be so interpreted nor could it be, and I would have added that I had not the slightest reason even to harbor such a thought in my heart. However, with respect to arousing attention: what if this passage was not directed at *you* at all, but rather at someone else who I *knew* (in the only way one can know such a thing) was guilty of self-interestedness? Because other circumstances have intervened, I am no longer able to explain this passage, but I assure you on my honor that it was *never* directed at you.

My dear Jacob, I have unlimited respect for a frank and honest character. I had heard good things about you, and for that reason alone I would never have allowed myself to pass such a judgment, even on your literary merit, if other reports had not discredited the good things I had heard. You have now completely won my personal respect by the impartial judgment of me to which you refer, by the warm and unselfish interest which you have shown in my activities as a member of the republic of scholars, and by the frankness of your letter. I hope I do not insult you when I say that it should not be held against me if you [do not] have my complete respect as a writer as well and if I express this publicly. My treatment of Beck and Schulze has demonstrated that I wish to be fair even to my opponents. This fairness has often been missing because of the influence of that powerful spirit in the north. Were it not for my desire to spare the feelings of a few of the worthy men who praised it, I would have criticized my own *Critique of All Revelation* even more harshly than my critics did. I knew the significance of my *Critique* even at the time it was printed, and I sent it to Kant accompanied by an unsparing self-critique. Finally, *I* believe I have improved since I was thirty.

Please accept this assurance of my respect.

Fichte

B, no. 339; *AA*, III, no. 419a. Ludwig Heinrich Jacob (1759–1827) was a professor of philosophy at Halle and editor of the *Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophischen Geistes*. The *Annalen* was one of the chief organs of "orthodox" Kantianism during this period and had published several hostile and sharply worded critical reviews of Fichte's writings. Fichte's exchange of letters with Jacob was initiated by criticism of the *Annalen* which Fichte had published in an editor's note two years earlier in the *Philosophisches Journal*. Despite being deeply affronted by this public criticism, which he considered an unwarranted personal attack, Jacob wrote a conciliatory letter to Fichte on February 26, 1799, in which he expressed his sincere desire to clear up the "moral misunderstanding" between them. Jacob went on to deny harboring any ill will toward Fichte and to deny that the *Annalen* was engaged in any sort of conspiracy or campaign against the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Though he chided Fichte for his defensiveness and suggested that he must bear some of the blame for the misinterpretations of his writings, Jacob concluded his letter with an expression of sympathetic support for Fichte (who was by then embroiled in the Atheism Controversy) and with a plea for public peace between the two of them. Fichte's reply, as contained in this draft of his letter, was equally conciliatory and appears to have satisfied Jacob as well. Two drafts of Fichte's letter to Jacob survive (*AA*, III, nos. 419a. and 419b). On most points, the translation follows the text in *B*, which would appear to be a composite version of the two drafts published separately in *AA*, III.

1. This reference is to a specific passage in Fichte's brief "Anmerkung zu dem folgenden Aufsatze," in *Philosophisches Journal* 7, no. 3 (1797), at which Jacob had taken special umbrage. In this passage the "Annalists" had been reviled in extremely rude, personal terms that questioned their motives and integrity. See *AA* I,4: 455.

2. Beck's (anonymously published) review of Fichte's *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre* and Parts I and II of the *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* appeared in the *Annalen* in February 1795.

3. The *Annalen* ran two different, anonymous reviews of Fichte's *Lectures*. The first, which appeared in the March 27, 1795, issue, was indeed "a lampoon." A second, more positive review (generally attributed to J. S. Beck) ran in the April 17, 1795, issue.

25. To Schmidt, March 17, 1799

Imagine yourself in my position, dear friend, and you will forgive the epistolary debt to you which I have allowed to accumulate. I had to lecture three hours a day, and on top of that had to compose a rather strong defense addressed to our court.[1]

In reply to your letter of January 19:

We accept with the sincerest pleasure your offer to take over the area of natural right in our journal and will be happy to receive your contributions as soon as possible.

What have you found unsatisfactory in my previous presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*? Surely not the principles? If you are dissatisfied with the manner of deduction, and if you are speaking of the published *Foundations*,[2] then you are quite right to find much that is unsatisfactory. This text was never intended for anyone but my students. Friend and foe alike have generally overlooked this. For three years I have been working on and lecturing from a new version, the first chapter of which has been printed in the *Journal*.[3] I intend to have this new exposition

published next winter. If you still take exception here and there, I would advise you to wait for this new revision.

You doubtless know by now that another G. (not Gabler in Altdorf) was the author of the lampoon[4] *which was the sole cause of all this commotion.*

From what I have heard, your opinion of Kant's latest writings is generally shared. It is nevertheless an admirable indication of the humane nature of our age that this judgment is not publicly aired out of respect for the worthy old man. After all, the weakness of these writings is so obvious that they can do no harm. The *two* Kantians who are still around make themselves more and more ridiculous by worshipfully mimicking even these crude efforts.

In answer to your letter of February 24:

I am deeply sorry that you and Prof. Schaumann did not receive copies of my book until long after it was available in the bookstores. Gabler, to whom I entrusted the books, assures me that he sent them January 18 (to Höyer or Stamme, I am not sure which). I await the publication of your essay with great curiousity. It is disgraceful the way the author of the Hannoverian "Appeal," the Saxon lampoonist, and poor, good Eberhard have once again confused the issue.[5] If at all possible I will publish in time for the next fair a short book on this subject, in which I hope to make the correct point of view so obvious that it will be possible to misunderstand it only out of malice.[6]

Tomorrow I am sending my written defense to the ducal court (it too will undoubtedly be made public), and then I will calmly await the outcome. I believe their mood is highly contradictory. They are ashamed and afraid before the proponents of enlightenment, but on the other hand they do not want to alienate the obscurantists. It may prove very difficult to find any way to reconcile these opposing interests. At least I am firmly resolved not to tolerate anything which is not worthy of me.

Greetings, respect, friendship
Fichte

B, no. 342; *AA*, III, no. 423. Johann Ernst Christian Schmidt (1772–1831) was a professor of philosophy at Giessen who, in 1798, had submitted a manuscript to Fichte for publication in the *Philosophisches Journal.* In an accompanying letter he had also declared his staunch allegiance to the *Wissenschaftslehre.* Letter no. 25 is written in reply to two subsequent letters from Schmidt. In the first he had requested permission to review books on natural right for the *Philosophisches Journal.* In the same letter he made a few critical comments concerning the published texts of Fichte's system and also expressed his dissatisfaction with Kant's most recently published writings, viz., the *Metaphysics of Morals,* Part II, "Strife among the Faculties," and *Anthropology.* In a later letter of February 26, 1799, Schmidt congratulated Fichte on the just-published *Appeal to the Public against the Charge of Atheism*—while complaining about the difficulty of obtaining a copy for himself—and announced his own intention of writing something in Fichte's defense. Schmidt's *Nachricht an das ununterrichtete Publikum den Fichteschen Atheismus betreffend* was published later in the year.

1. Viz., "J. G. Fichtes als Verfassers des ersten angeklagten Aufsatzes, und Mitherausgebers des phil. Journals Verantwortungsschrift." This handwritten report to the court was later published as an appendix to Fichte's *Gerichtliche Verantwortungschrift.*

2. *Foundations of the Entire Wissenschaftslehre* (1794–95).

3. *Attempt at a New Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1797–98).

4. This reference is to the anonymously published pamphlet *Schreiben eines Vaters an seinen studierenden Sohn über den Fichtischen und Forbergischen Atheismus* (1798). The author of this pamphlet, which helped set the stage for the Atheism Controversy, was identified only as "G." Many people erroneously concluded that the pamphlet was written by the well-known theologian J. P. Gabler (1753–1826), who publicly disavowed the pamphlet.

5. A. W. Rehburg (whose interpretation of the French Revolution had been subjected to severe criticism in Fichte's early *Contribution*) is identified in *AA* III, 3 as the anonymous author of the "Hannoverian Appeal," *Appelation an den gesunden Menschenverstand, in einigen Aphorismen über des Herrn Professor Fichte Appelation an das Publickum, wegen ihm beygemessener atheistischen Aeusserungen.* The "Saxon lampoonist" is similarly identified as J. G. Dyk, author of yet another anonymously published pamphlet, *Ueber das Herrn Professor Fichte Appelation an das Publicum.* J. A. Eberhard's contribution to the atheism controversy was a pamphlet titled *Ueber den Gott des Herrn Professor Fichte und den Götzen seiner Gegner.*

6. Fichte did not in fact publish such a work, but see note 1 to letter no. 26., below.

26. To Reinhold, April 22, 1799

My dear friend,

The primary reason for the misunderstandings which have recently arisen is, without any doubt, that conflict which our friend Jacobi has greatly exacerbated. Even before receiving Jacobi's letter, I had drafted the *enclosed piece.* I wrote it as part of a short work which I may or may not still publish, though in a different form.[1] (It is no more than a first, rough *draft,* and at the moment I have neither the time nor the desire to put it in any better form.)

The reason that I have had such bad luck as an author is that I am so little capable of placing myself in the frame of mind of the reading public; I always assume that many things are self-evident which hardly anyone else finds to be self-evident. However, I believe that I have been less guilty of this in the enclosed piece. I have discussed the relationship between the philosophical and the everyday points of view with all the clarity I could muster in my *Wissenschaftslehre,* in the "Introductions" to the *Wissenschaftslehre* which appeared in the *Philosophisches Journal,* in the introduction to my *Natural Right,* in the first part of my *Ethical Theory,* and goodness knows where else. The only thing that I forgot to do was to attack directly that prejudice which encourages people to confuse philosophy with practical wisdom—a prejudice which is deeply rooted in all previous philosophy.

It was during the present quarrel over my theory of God that this misunderstanding became obvious and began to have serious consequences.

At present I am disgusted with everything that pertains to this conflict, and I feel absolutely powerless. In view of this, perhaps the clearest way for me to explain my position to you is to say that I subscribe completely to all of Jacobi's statements. For a long time I have known and clearly realized everything that he says in his letter. As pleased as I am that he wrote this excellent piece *for* me, at the same time I find it incomprehensible how he could have believed that it was directed *against* me. He is intimately acquainted with the essence of speculation as well as the essence of life. Why then can he not impartially *raise himself above both* in order to compare them? Why must he *either* be caught up in the standpoint of speculation—"to such an extent that he is even ashamed to express to himself his objections to my system"[2]—*or else,* at another moment, adopt the standpoint of life and mock what he himself recognizes to be consumate speculation, cursing and abhoring it? Since he himself, both in his published works and in that letter, refers to his individual personality, perhaps I may be allowed to explain the above conflict [between the standpoints of speculation and life] in terms of his personality, for otherwise this conflict is entirely incomprehensible. He rightly refuses to tolerate *logical fanaticism,* and so do I. But he appears at the same time to harbor an opposite sort of fanaticism, which I may term the fanaticism of *real life.* It is this fanaticism which forbids him to abstract dispassionately and impartially from real life, even for the sake of experiment. This fanaticism would seem to be explicable on the basis of that psychological phenomenon of which he speaks in the third appendix to the second edition of his *Letters concerning Spinoza's Theory.*[3] I believe that I harbor no fanaticism at all, whether of the first or of the second sort, and I consider such apathy to be absolutely necessary if one is to understand transcendental philosophy completely, without being either angered by it or lured by it into despair.

It is just for this reason, my dearest and most beloved friend, whose love of truth I so deeply respect, that I think that the direction you have now taken[4] is a wrong one which will lead to new confusion. (This is on the assumption that I understand you correctly, for at the moment it is impossible for me really to *study* your letter.) I am most sincerely convinced that there is no room for any *philosophical* standpoint between Jacobi's and mine. Jacobi will deny such a possibility just as strongly as I do; indeed, his letter contains several passages in which he says as much, though not in the same words. The offhand remark which I made above about the difference between speculation and real life is no more than a personal maxim of one philosopher (who, after all, is and remains a human being as well); it does not, however, form *any part of my philosophy.* A philosopher's philosophy is independent of his life, and his life is independent of his philosophy.

Dear friend, may I speak as frankly *with* you as I have just done *about*

Jacobi—and as I will speak *with* him? Just as Jacobi betrays his ardor against philosophy, *you,* from the beginning of your career as a philosophical author, have demonstrated in your philosophizing a certain *practical ardor* which you obtained not from Kantianism, but from your *previous* philosophy. This led you to Kant's philosophy, from which you expected better practical results. You have always nurtured the hope of using philosophy to *improve* mankind, and you still nurture this hope. You hope to use philosophy to *convert* men and to *instruct* them concerning their duties in this life and their hopes for the next one. You are beginning to realize that scientific idealism is just as poorly suited for this purpose as was your previous system; indeed, idealism threatens to carry the confusion and scandal to an even higher pitch. This, it seems to me, is the reason why you are looking for some middle standpoint [between Jacobi's and my own].

I, on the other hand, believe that one of the distinctive advantages of scientific idealism is that it knows itself very well and humbly renounces the exalted goal of improving and instructing mankind. Life can be improved only by those things which themselves proceed from life. Idealism, however, is the true opposite of life. The proper goal of idealism is knowledge for its own sake. It is of practical benefit only *indirectly*—that is, its utility is *pedagogic,* in the broadest sense of the term.

I think it is absolutely meaningless to associate philosophy with any particular attitudes and ways of thinking. Is *philosophy* as such atheistic or not? This is a question which I cannot understand. For me this is like asking whether a triangle is red or green, sweet or bitter. The only sense that I can make of the accusation of atheism against some *actual philosophical* system (among which I count my own) is the following: *The system in question provides the foundation for an allegedly atheistic pedagogics* (theory of God); that is, *it is conducive of an atheistic way of thinking.* Now at the moment there are very few people indeed who are in any position to declare that such is the case with my system. That people—and totally unphilosophical people at that—should try at this early date to judge my philosophy in this respect is a blunder, one which, God willing, will seem amusing a few years from now. That this issue is being discussed at this point is something which is completely contrary to my desires and plans. But undoubtedly this fate—and I do believe it is *fate*—will have its salutary consequences. I did not wish to accept Forberg's article[5] and, as his friend, advised him against publishing it. Forberg would not take my advice. It conflicted with my principles to *refuse to accept* the submitted article *pro auctoritate,*[6] in my capacity as *editor* and therefore as *censor.* My principles in this matter are so strong that I would never refuse to accept similar articles, despite the way this affair has turned out.

I wanted to add some footnotes of my own to Forberg's article. Forberg, however, refused, and on this single point I perhaps showed a lack

of discretion. I compiled into a separate article of my own the things I wanted to say in the notes.[7] This essay had the following result:

I have lost my position—or should I say that I have resigned it? It would take me too long to describe to you here the incomprehensible way in which people have behaved in this affair. The story will shortly become known to the entire public. I am sorry that I am unable to say that I am entirely in the right and that the others are entirely wrong. Of course I am not in the wrong vis-à-vis them, but I am not entirely in the right vis-à-vis myself. I should not have engaged them on their own ground, and thus I entirely deserved to be outwitted by them.

You may, however, set your mind at ease about one thing: it is not *as an atheist* that I am being turned out.

I have to collect and arrange documents and put my domestic affairs in order. I will also have to seek some place of refuge where I can for a while enjoy a bit of leisure *in complete anonymity,* where I will be safe from the literary and political news which fills me with an unconquerable and deadly disgust, and where I will be protected from the anathemas of the priests and the stones of the faithful. Such leisure will not be useless in terms of my own self-education.

Nevertheless, I will most probably *have to* hold out here long enough to receive another letter from you and to reply to it. (Holding out here will be a hard *necessity.* You can scarcely believe the way people are behaving toward me.) There is no need for you to worry about the vacation time; from now on I am on permanent vacation.

I have no objection to your publishing your letter to me, up to page 19. Lavater has written to me as well. Quite apart from his—widely shared—misunderstanding concerning the true meaning of philosophy, he also retains a belief in the authority of Jesus, Paul, etc.—more explicitly, a belief in the authority of his *Zurich interpretation of the Bible*—which makes it impossible for me to correct his concepts. I sent him only a brief reply, in which I told him that he had not understood me at all and promised him a more detailed reply, which, disgusted as I am with this entire subject, I will probably have to continue to owe him from now on.

P.S. The senate has made no move to keep me at the university. However, I have just heard that the students have begun negotiations with the court, which they have bitterly attacked.

Should anyone, whether here or elsewhere (for from wherever it might come it can only have originated here), write you describing the story of my dismissal, believe nothing, absolutely *no one.* In the first place, no one is familiar with the main circumstances, nor will they learn them from me. All I can say is that there is a gap which I am unable to fill. In addition, the court's emissaries have clouded and corrupted

everyone's verdict. The only persons I have heard judge the matter correctly are the students. After all, they are the truly injured party and consider themselves to be such.

Postscript.

I have just received your letter of April 16.[8] Rather than the passage cited by Jacobi, it is more likely that the one which prompted the general's remarkable quotation was a remark of Forberg's on p. 220 of the seventh number of the *Philosophisches Journal* (1797). *My* own defense can be found there as well, in a note which I thought it necessary to add at the bottom of the page.[9]

Still, I do not consider this incident to be very serious, partly because the general's speech will not become well known in Germany. Jacobi will no more circulate this speech than he will spread what the general said to his son.

The expert must of course admit that in Forberg's article one catches a glimpse of truly skeptical Kantian atheism. This is why I wrote in my preface[10] that Forberg did not so much oppose my convictions as *fail to reach them.* In my *Judicial Defense* I have given my view of the most damaging passage in Forberg's essay. On this point I expressed myself as clearly as I could without doing any civil injury to Forberg, who, after all, is the one against whom the whole attack is directed and on whom people would like to place the entire blame. What do *you* think about this? It is true and obvious that the Kantian "as if"[11] is utterly opposed to my system.

My preceding remarks about your present philosophical direction were not meant to imply that I think that you are clearly stating certain things which I do not find to be entirely well grounded. Rather, they express my fear that these ideas might lead you astray in the future. Perhaps I have misunderstood you, and you are more fully in agreement than I thought with the enclosed piece—which includes *all of my convictions on this point.* I am also sending a short letter to Jacobi, in which I say approximately the same things that I have written to you. I will also send him a copy of the enclosed fragment and will return his copy of the general's speech.

I entrust myself to your love and assure you in return of my warmest love and respect.

Fichte

A Fragment

Once again I must call attention to the essence of transcendental philosophy, and I beg the philosophical public to allow this reminder to be the last.

There are two very different standpoints for the activity of thinking. The natural and common way of thinking is to *think directly of objects.* Or, one can consciously and intentionally think of one's own *thinking* itself. People generally prefer to call this latter way of thinking artificial. The former way of thinking is that of ordinary life and of *science* (*materialiter sic dicta*[12]); the latter is the standpoint of transcendental philosophy, which, precisely for this reason, I have called *Wissenschaftslehre* or the "*Theory* of Scientific Knowledge," that is, the theory and science of all knowledge (though by no means is such a theory itself an instance of real, objective knowledge[13]).

For the most part the pre-Kantian philosophical systems lacked any correct awareness of their own standpoint and simply wavered back and forth between the two ways of thinking described above. The system of Wolff and Baumgarten,[14] which was the one which prevailed immediately before Kant's, consciously adopted the standpoint of ordinary thinking and proposed to do nothing less than expand the sphere of ordinary thinking and, through the power of its syllogisms, create new objects for natural thinking.

Our system is directly opposed to this one. For our system completely rejects the possibility of using pure thinking to produce any object which could be of any concern to life and the (material) sciences. Our system recognizes nothing to be real *which is not based upon some inner or outer perception.* Thus, insofar as metaphysics is taken to be a system of real knowledge which is produced merely by thinking, then Kant and I both entirely reject the possibility of metaphysics. Kant prides himself on having totally eradicated this sort of metaphysics, and, since no one has yet had a single intelligent or intelligible word to say in its defense, this is surely where the matter will rest forever.

In rejecting the attempts of others to expand the realm of ordinary thinking, it would never occur to us in turn to try to employ our system to expand the sphere of ordinary thinking (which is the only kind of thinking which deals with reality). Instead, all that our system aims to do is to comprehend and present this ordinary way of thinking in an exhaustive manner.

Our philosophical *thinking* has no meaning [by itself] and has not the least content. All meaning and content is to be found only in that thinking which is *thought of* in our philosophical thinking. Our philosophical thinking is no more than the instrument we use to assemble our work. Once the work is finished then the instrument can be discarded as of no further use.

Before the spectator's eyes we assemble the model of a body from the model of its parts. You come upon us in the midst of our work and cry: "Look at that naked skeleton! Is it supposed to be a body?" No, dear people, it is not supposed to be a body, merely the skeleton of one. The only way that we can make our teaching comprehensible is by proceed-

ing step by step, adding one part to another—which is the sole reason why we have undertaken this labor. Wait a bit, and we will clothe this skeleton in veins, muscles, and skin.

Once we finish, then you cry: "Make the body move and speak! Make the blood circulate in its veins! In a word, make it live!" Here again you are wrong. We have never claimed to be able to do what you ask. Only *nature* can bestow life; *art* cannot do it. This is something of which we are very well aware, and we believe that precisely this realization on our part distinguishes us favorably from certain other philosophers. But if we have constructed any part of our model differently from the way it actually exists in nature, or if we have added or omitted anything, then we have indeed erred. This is what you must look for if you wish to criticize or praise us intelligently.

The living body which we are copying is *ordinary, real consciousness.* Our deductions, which can only proceed step by step, represent the gradual assembly of the parts of this body. Until the entire system stands completed before us, everything which we can present is no more than a part. Of course, one must already have available the parts upon which this latter rests, for otherwise there would be no method in our procedure. But it is not necessary to display these various parts in the text which you are presently reading. Here we are presupposing that you are familiar with our previous writings. We cannot say everything at once. You will have to wait in order to find out what *follows* the part which you have before you, unless, that is, you understand how to discover it for yourself.

Furthermore, even *when* and *where* we have reached completion and have arrived at [the standpoint of] *completely real ordinary thinking,* this ordinary thinking—*as it appears in our philosophy*—is not itself any form of real thinking. Instead, all that appears in our philosophy is a *description* and *presentation* of real thinking. (Our system has already obtained such partial completion in several different areas of consciousness, but not yet in the philosophy of religion.)

To put the point explicitly and precisely: *all reality originates for us* only insofar as *one does not engage in philosophizing,* that is, insofar as one has either never raised oneself to the level of philosophical abstraction or else deigns to return from the heights of philosophy to the mechanism of life. The converse is also true: as soon as one lifts oneself to the level of pure speculation then *this reality necessarily disappears,* because one has then escaped from the mechanism of thinking, which is the basis of all reality. *Life,* not speculation, is the goal. Speculation is no more than a means. Nor is it even a means for *improving* life; for speculation exists in a totally different world, and anything which is to have any influence on life must itself proceed from life. Speculation is only a means for *gaining knowledge* about life.

One cannot have knowledge of that in which one is oneself caught up, of what one is oneself. One must separate oneself [from that of which one wishes to have knowledge] and must adopt a standpoint which is different from the standpoint of what one wishes to know. "Speculation" is the name for this separation from actual life; the standpoint which lies outside of the standpoint of life is the standpoint of speculation. One can gain knowledge about oneself only insofar as these two different standpoints coexist—that is, only insofar as the standpoint which transcends life exists alongside the standpoint of life itself.

One can live without engaging in speculation, and such a life might even be entirely in accord with reason; for one can live without having any knowledge of life. But one cannot have any knowledge of life without engaging in speculation.

In short, it is here that the duality which permeates the entire system of reason and which has its foundation in the original duality of subject and object reaches its highest level. LIFE *is the* TOTALITY *of* OBJECTIVE RATIONAL BEING; SPECULATION *is the* TOTALITY OF SUBJECTIVE RATIONAL BEING.[15] *The one is impossible without the other.* LIFE, *understood as active surrender to the mechanism [of nature], is impossible* WITHOUT THAT ACTIVITY AND FREEDOM (*i.e., speculation*) WHICH THUS SURRENDERS ITSELF, *even though not every individual is clearly conscious of this.* SPECULATION *is impossible apart from* THAT LIFE FROM WHICH IT ABSTRACTS. *Life and speculation can only be defined in terms of each other.* LIVING *is, strictly speaking,* NOT-PHILOSOPHIZING; PHILOSOPHIZING *is, strictly speaking,* NOT-LIVING. *I am acquainted with no definition of these two terms which is more apt than this one. There is here a complete antithesis. It is just as impossible to find any common meeting point* between life and philosophy as it is to comprehend that* X *which lies at the foundation of the subject-object (the I). The only place where these opposites meet is in the consciousness of an actual philosopher, since he has access to both standpoints.*

*This is the sort of thing which Reinhold (if I understand his last letter correctly) appears of late to be seeking. On this point he seems to have been misled by Jacobi's protest against speculation.

B, no. 356; *AA*, III, no. 440. This letter was sent from Jena immediately after the shock of Fichte's dismissal. (For a brief account of the Atheisim Controversy and the events that led to Fichte's dismissal, see the editor's introduction.) In this letter to Reinhold, Fichte addresses a number of different topics related to the Atheism Controversy, but at this point he was more concerned with Jacobi's recently published *Open Letter to Fichte* (trans. Diana I. Behler, in *Philosophy of German Idealism*, ed. Ernst Behler [New York: Continuum 1987], pp. 119–41), than with any of the scurrilous, anonymously published attacks to which he had been subjected. Jacobi's letter was dated March 3–21, 1799. In this letter he publicly charged that the *Wissenschaftslehre* was a form of "subjectivism," and indeed, that transcendental idealism was really identical to "nihilism" (see Jacobi, *Werke*, III: 1–57, as well as *AA*, III, no. 428.I). Reinhold responded to Jacobi's letter with a long letter of his own in Fichte's defense (March 27–April 6, 1799), which he sent to Fichte along with a request for permission to publish it. Subsequently, Reinhold's letter was published as *Sendschreiben an J. C. Lavater und J. G. Fichte über den Glauben an Gott* (*AA*, III, no. 436.I).

Letter no. 26 and the appended "Fragment" address a variety of issues raised and discussed in the exchange between Jacobi and Reinhold, above all the proper relationship between "speculation" and "life," that is, between transcendental philosophy and "the natural and common way of thinking." The text in *AA* includes a few lines that do not appear in *B*. These extra lines have been incorporated into the translation.

1. Fichte never published the longer work from which the "Fragment" appended to this letter derives. But it was posthumously published by his son under the title "Rückerinnerungen, Antworten, Fragen" in his edition of his father's *Sämmtliche Werke, SW,* V: 331–73 (*AA* II, 5: 103–86).

2. In his *Letter to Fichte* Jacobi had written: "I am able to put myself in Fichte's standpoint and to *isolate* myself there intellectually to such an extent that I am almost ashamed of my other opinions and am hardly able to articulate in my own presence my objections to his system" (*Werke,* III: 18; *AA* III, 3: 252).

3. *Werke* IV, 2: 67–69. In the passage in question Jacobi relates an incident that occurred during his childhood, which made a lasting impression upon him. He recalls how, as a boy of eight or nine, he was pondering the nature of eternity when he was suddenly overcome by the idea of an infinitely prolonged existence. This thought struck him so forcefully that he cried out and fell unconscious. When he revived, he forced himself to remember that terrible thought and the despair accompanying it. The rest of his life he tried to keep at bay this thought—as well as the equally terrifying thought of his own annihilation.

4. Reinhold wished to find some "middle ground" between Fichte's position and Jacobi's from which he might be able to mediate the disagreement between the two.

5. "On the Development of the Concept of Religion." It was this article by Forberg (together with Fichte's essay "On the Foundation of Our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe," which appeared in the same issue of the *Philosophisches Journal*) which provoked the charge of atheism against the editors of the *Philosophisches Journal.*

6. "By virtue of authority."

7. "On the Foundation of our Belief in a Divine Government of the Universe."

8. In his letter to Fichte of April 16, 1799, Reinhold reported on a recent letter he had received from Jacobi, in which Jacobi had enclosed a copy of a speech delivered by the commander of the French troops then occupying the Ruhr, Gen. Louis-Marie Turreau. Jacobi had, in turn, obtained this document from his son, who was mayor of Aachen. Moreover, Jacobi had reported on a conversation between his son and the general in which the general had replied to the mayor's criticism of a certain passage in his speech by claiming that the "extreme" remarks had been derived from "one of your greatest philosophers, Fichte." In fact, however, as Jacobi recognized, the passage was not from Fichte at all, but rather from an essay of Forberg's "Ueber den Geist des Lutheranismus," which had appeared in the *Philosphisches Journal* in 1797. Nevertheless, Jacobi was concerned that, under the circumstances, this allegation might somehow work to undermine further Fichte's position at Jena and wanted to alert Reinhold so that he could in turn inform Fichte.

9. In his essay "Ueber den Geist des Lutheranismus" Forberg had claimed that reason, left to its own devices, tends to transform unconditional moral duties into conditional ones and that religion had originally arisen merely as a device to prevent this from happening. But since philosophy has now succeeded in explaining unconditional moral duty without reference to God, religion is no longer really necessary. To this passage Fichte (as editor of the journal in which Forberg's article appeared) had added the following, remarkable note: "If it is true that virtue, understood as the public worship of a higher being = religion, and that religion = virtue understood as the public worship of a higher being: then it follows that there is no room for any religion which considers virtue as something which is necessary in itself. And in fact, these are identical propositions. But we are unaware that religion is understood in this way by that philosophy which (so it is claimed) is supposed to do away with religion. On the contrary, we know that within this system religion is understood in an entirely different way" (*AA* III, 3: 329n.).

10. Viz., in the editor's preface to the issue of the *Philosophisches Journal* which contained his and Forberg's articles concerning the basis for belief in God.

11. Forberg had argued for a "Kantian" view of religion as a sort of "fiction." According

to this view, religion can be reduced entirely to morality, and religious beliefs, accordingly, contain no theoretical truth at all, though they may still serve a useful function if one is able to treat them "as if" they were true. For Kant's discussion of such "regulative" beliefs, see the *Critique of Pure Reason,* A616/B644–A620/B648 and A672/B700–B700/B728.

12. "In the material sense."

13. "Keineswegs aber selbst ein reeles and objektives Wissen." I.e., since transcendental philosophy is concerned with our thinking and not with the "material objects" of ordinary experience, then the sort of knowledge obtained within this philosophy is different from ordinary knowledge. It is only in this sense that philosophical knowledge is not "real" or "objective."

14. Christian Wolff (1679–1754) was a follower of Leibniz who developed Leibniz's thought into a comprehensive system. Wolffianism became the dominant "school" of eighteenth-century German philosophy. A. G. Baumgarten (1714–62) was a follower of Wolff whose most original contributions were in the field of aesthetics. For more information, see chaps. 11 and 12 of Beck's *Early Germany Philosophy.*

15. "*Das* LEBEN *ist die* TOTALITÄT *des* OBJECTIVEN VENUNFTWESENS; *Die* SPEKULATION *die* TOTALITÄT *des* SUBJEKTIVEN."

27. To Jensen, May 3, 1799

Most honored friend,

Your overview of my system is first rate and proves that you call yourself a "nonphilosopher" merely out of modesty, for you have grasped the essence of speculation correctly and well.

However, in one passage you have laid my case before common sense in too favorable a light. On p. 6 you say: "As far as all other characteristics are concerned, *so long as they in themselves are immediately present, then perhaps we will also become conscious of them sometime in the future.*" This is put in such a way that it will satisfy *common* sense for the time being—but only so long as common sense fails to realize that I do not accept any existence whatsoever apart from its relation to some consciousness.

When people, such as, for example, that inopportune appelant who appropriated for himself the title of your essay,[1] speak of a "*Christian* God," this only proves clearly that [my] opponents have no justification for denying that charge which they so much resent, namely, the charge of heathen idolatry. Many other things prove this as well, such as, for example, the talk of a *national* religion as something which is the responsibility of the *state.* Christians may have some traits which are characteristically their own (I do not care to go into that), but what they most certainly do not have is their own God. A "Christian God" is a national and sectarian tutelary god—like the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (or like the "God of our fathers," to which the old Swiss federalists refer in their recent proclamation). Hardly any better is what *Lavater* recently wrote me concerning *his* God and *my* God and *Fénelon's* God.[2] At that point where Lavater, Fichte, and Fénelon begin to figure in the concept

of God, that is where superstition and idolatry begin. The only true God is the God of *all* reason. With a good conscience I could no more tolerate anything "Fichtean" in my concept of God than I could anything *Christian* (in the sectarian sense) or Jewish or "Lavaterian" or "Fénelonian."

Farewell, dear man, and be assured of my esteem, as I hope to be assured of your goodwill.

Fichte

B, no. 361; *AA*, III, no. 444. Friedrich Christoph Jensen (1754–1827) was a professor of law at Kiel and the author of a pamphlet defending Fichte against the charge of atheism, *Kann man Herrn Professor Fichte mit Recht beschuldigen, dass er den Gott der Christen läugne? Beantwortet durch eine für den gesundern Menschenverstand fasslich Darstellung seines Systems von einem Nichtphilosophen* (1799). Jensen sent a copy of this pamphlet to Fichte, to which letter no. 27 is a reply.

1. Viz., A. W. Rehburg, author of an anonymously published pamphlet titled *Appelation an der gesunden Menschenverstand, in einigen Aphorismen über des Herrn Professor Fichte Appelation an das Publikum, wegen ihm beygemessener atheistischen Aeusserungen.*

2. This refers to Lavater's letter to Fichte of February 2–12, 1799, the same letter of which Fichte complained in his April 22 letter to Reinhold.

28. To Reinhold, May 3, 1799

Honored Friend,

The day before yesterday I received your *Concerning the Paradoxes,* etc. I was both overjoyed with your book and ashamed of the warnings, admonitions, and instructions that I had given you in my last letter and in the enclosure I sent with it;[1] I see that you did not need them at all. After that enclosure I do not need to say that almost everything you write seems to come from my heart. I am hastening to tell you this, and to apologize sincerely for my last letter before you answer me with a well-deserved rebuke.

I was particularly led astray by the line on p. 3 of your letter,[2] where you spoke of "the use which our will should make of our philosophizing," as well as by what preceded and followed these words. In my opinion, philosophy has no such direct use. I also misunderstood the word "standpoint." I now see that you were speaking of precisely the same way of thinking which I mentioned in my reply and expounded in the enclosure, namely, the way of thinking which separates and compares philosophy and life.

I also now understand better what you mean by "a sound concept." I must confess that this expression made me suspect you a bit of indulging in "popular philosophy."[3] I would call a concept "sound" if it were in accord with the original system of reason. Concepts like this are *discovered* by speculation, but speculation does not endow concepts with life

and efficacy. Only a thorough improvement of the will can do this, and such an improvement is not produced by philosophy but must come from life itself.

So we are in complete agreement concerning the matter itself, even though we each try to emphasize the things which best accord with our distinct individuality. You are more interested in winning new converts, and thus you emphasize the *connection* between speculation and life. I am more interested in scaring away outsiders so that they do not become involved in matters which are none of their concern, and thus I emphasize the opposition between speculation and life. *You* will not be able to win over everyone, and then it becomes *my* job to protect our science from those who have not been won over.

My own way of thinking has undergone a considerable change in the wake of the change in my external circumstances and because of the sincere disgust which this controversy has generated within me for the so-called scholarly world. Consequently, I now understand better than ever your remarks concerning my tone (even though the tone in which you made these remarks was itself somewhat strident). What you actually seem to expect me to do is, first, to assume that the scholarly world is more childish, stupid, and slow to comprehend than I would ever have been able to imagine, and second, to take no side in a case which has been brought against me, and to be instead an impartial, even *benevolent,* judge—one who goes so far as to assist his opponent's cause and to acknowledge his opponent's advantages, even if he himself has already renounced them. Following honest self-examination, I have concluded that up until now I have been too *modest* to assume such a role. But the behavior of the public in the present controversy has freed me of all modesty. Can you believe that these people, who do not have the faintest idea what speculation is, take note of my deduction of the belief in God and then try to heal me with their catachism! *O tribus Anticyris insanabilia capita!*[4]

If one reads pp. 19–26 in your book one can understand why the most recent philosophy is so hateful and lacking in understanding. Of couse, one cannot be further angry about the inevitable *results* of this state of philosophy. But doesn't the reason for it infuriate you and drive you mad? Is it comprehensible, is it excusable that these people are neither ashamed nor embarrassed to *be* what they are and to *will* to remain so? That freedom which is the subject of my teaching is something which at the same time I demand of everyone and which I assume that every person possesses, and for me there is *no blindness without guilt.* Despite my previous promise to improve in this respect, I still feel that it will be hard for me to regard my fellow human beings *coolly* and *calmly*—as if they were not free, but were thinking machines requiring only proper adjust-

ment. I can see no way of getting along with them except by leaving their company for a while.

Soon I will be sending you a long circular letter containing the story of my dismissal as well as the most important documents.[5] I intend for you to see to the publication of this circular letter if you think that its public disclosure is necessary and worthwhile, which is something that I leave entirely to your own judgment. You may add your name as editor or not—whatever you think best.

You can imagine the—what shall I call it!—to which I have most recently been subjected! I have been looking for some out-of-the-way nook where I could hide myself for a few years in the strictest seclusion, until both the public turmoil and my disgust with the public had subsided. Thanks to the kindness of a nearby prince with whom I am acquainted I had some hope of finding such a nook. Highly placed persons, however, were smart enough to guess my plans and indicated to the prince in question that they would not like to see this happen, etc. etc. What do you say to that? Would you have imagined anyone in our enlightened age and country capable of such a step? I despise this too, but unfortunately one still has to occupy space somewhere! You are my only friend. Remain so.

Fichte[6]

B, no. 360; *AA*, III, no. 443. This letter, one of the last Fichte wrote to Reinhold before his departure from Jena, was written to acknowledge receipt of Reinhold's latest book, *Ueber die Paradoxen der neuesten Philosophie* (1799).

1. See above, letter no. 26.

2. Viz., in Reinhold's published "open letter to Fichte" of March 27–April 6, 1799.

3. On the *Popularphilosophen* and their appeal to "sound common sense," see Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, pp. 319–24.

4. "O heads which cannot even be cured by the three Anticyra," i.e., things are so bad that nothing can cure them. Horace, *Epistles* II, 3, 300 (A.P. 300).

5. See Fichte's letter to Reinhold, May 22, 1799.

6. From this point on, the letter is continued by Fichte's wife, Johanna, who informs Reinhold that she is writing, without her husband's knowledge, to acquaint Reinhold more closely with their circumstances. In her part of the letter, Johanna relates various attempts by Fichte's enemies to prevent him or anyone else from replying to the charge of atheism, as well as their attempts (alluded to by Fichte himself in the last paragraph of his letter) to prevent him from finding refuge in the nearby town of Rudolfstadt, under the patronage of Prince Ludwig Friedrich II of Schwarzburg-Rudolfstadt. The true aim of their enemies, she contends, "is to force us to flee to France, so that they will then be able to say: 'That is what he always wanted; he was never a real German.'"

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